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'Hostages in Lebanon could be freed soon'

WASHINGTON (R) — ABC News, quoting a source inside Lebanon's Hizbollah (Party of God), said Tuesday the 12 Westerners held hostage in Lebanon might be released "very, very soon." According to this source, "there is pressure coming from both Iran and Syria for the release of these hostages," the U.S. television network reported from London. The network's chief European correspondent, Pierre Salinger, quoted the source as saying the release could come "very, very soon now" as leaders of Hizbollah return from Tehran, where they met Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani Monday.

Turkey, Syria oppose dismemberment of Iraq

ANKARA (R) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa left Ankara Tuesday after agreeing with Turkey that Iraq should be kept intact. "The views on Iraq's territorial integrity were very similar. Both countries fully support it," a foreign ministry source said after Mr. Sharaa held two days of talks in Ankara. Syria and Turkey, which both border Iraq, were partners in the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq. Syria contributed troops and Turkey let U.S. warplanes bomb Iraq from its territory.

Assad meets Yamaguchi

DAMASCUS (AP) — A Japanese parliamentary official held talks with President Hafez Al Assad Monday and a Japanese source said the discussions included \$100 million in commodity aid for Syria. The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said only that the talks between Mr. Assad and Toshio Yamaguchi, the chairman of the External Economic Relations Committee in Japan's house of commons, were on the latest developments in the region.

Bush, Mandela disagree on Gulf war

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House Monday denied that President George Bush and Nelson Mandela had an angry argument over the Gulf war in a telephone conversation on March 6. "It was a friendly conversation," White House officials said. A questioner at a White House press briefing told presidential spokesman Martin Fitzwater that a report out of South Africa had said Mr. Mandela "attacked Bush for his war position" during the phone discussion. While denying there was a will, Mr. Fitzwater issued a statement that said Mr. Bush and Mr. Mandela each stated his position on the Gulf war and Bush "indicated areas of disagreement with ANC (African National Congress) views."

Afghan rebels report downing 2 'copters'

ISLAMABAD (R) — Guerrillas fighting the Soviet-backed Afghan government said Tuesday they had shot down two military helicopters near the besieged eastern garrison town of Khost. The helicopters fell in a rebel-controlled area Monday evening as the two sides fought with artillery and rockets for the fourth day running, a Pakistan-based rebel news service said. No independent confirmation of the report was available.

Arens urges arms control conference

TEL AVIV (AP) — Defence Minister Moshe Arens Tuesday urged a visiting U.S. congressional delegation to push for an arms control conference on the Middle East. Mr. Arens told the 27-member delegation that the Gulf war should have brought home to the West the cost of arming a nation such as Iraq, said Mr. Arens' aide, Dan Naveh. "Maybe the time has come for a meeting between the arms-exporting countries in order to reach an agreement on limiting the arms race in this region," Mr. Naveh quoted Mr. Arens as saying.

Jordan demands protection for expatriates in Kuwait

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian government is trying to dispatch a team of Jordanian officials to Kuwait in a bid to ensure the safety of Jordanian and Palestinian citizens there in the wake of persisting reports which speak of the mistreatment of the expatriates, Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri said Tuesday.

"We have requested the Kuwaiti government to facilitate the visit of a Jordanian mission and it is hoped that permission for the mission's task will be coming very soon," Mr. Masri said in a statement to Jordan Television following a cabinet meeting during which the plight of the Jordanians and Palestinians was examined.

The London-based human rights organisation Amnesty International Monday reported that Palestinians were being arbitrarily arrested and tortured by armed Kuwaiti soldiers and civilians.

Amnesty called for an investigation by the United Nations and the International Committee

of the Red Cross (ICRC) into the abuses.

At least seven Jordanians arrived in Baghdad from Kuwait Sunday after a week-long journey on foot and told reporters that they had been detained for no reason, beaten up and tortured before being deported. The seven men, aged between 25 and 35 years, were speaking at the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad after arriving in the Iraqi capital from Safwan, near the Kuwaiti border.

Mr. Masri told Jordan Television that the cabinet examined reports about the torture and other abuses of the Jordanian and Palestinian community in Kuwait.

"We have persisting reports saying that the conditions of these people were deteriorating and that constantly exposed to harassment," Mr. Masri said.

"In the light of this information I met with the Kuwaiti ambassador to Jordan and discussed with him the matter, demanding that

he intervene with his government immediately to provide protection to the Jordanian and Palestinian citizens living in Kuwait," Mr. Masri added.

The Jordanian government, he said, also contacted the ICRC and Amnesty International and is still awaiting their reports about the situation.

The Jordanian embassy in Baghdad has been up providing us information about the situation in the light of information it is receiving from the expelled Jordanians arriving in the Iraqi capital, and the government is awaiting further information from the embassy.

If need be, the Jordanian government will contact the United Nations, according to Mr. Masri. He said Jordan could spare no efforts in pursuit of defending the rights of the Jordanian and Palestinian communities.

Since the Iraqis pulled out from Kuwait, there had been disturbing reports that Palestinians, Sudanese, Iraqis, and other

nationalities had been arbitrarily picked up and tortured, Amnesty said. It said in the past week Kuwaitis had expelled scores of Palestinians to Iraq.

One of the deportees arriving at the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad was quoted by Reuters as saying: "We were arrested for no reason other than being Jordanians, beaten up and tortured at a school in the Jahra district near the border with 148 other prisoners among them Palestinians, Iraqis and Sudanese."

The Associated Press said that scores of Palestinians, Iraqis and Jordanians had been brought to hospitals with what doctors described as torture wounds. These, the agency said, included lacerations, cigarette burns and internal bleeding caused by beatings.

His Majesty King Hussein has asked the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to use their influence to protect Jordanians and Palestinians in Kuwait.



Taher Al Masri

Abdul-Latif Arabiyat, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, urged Kuwaiti authorities "to show wisdom, exert self-restraint and stop this demagoguery that is harming those who helped in building and developing Kuwait."

He said the situation in Kuwait, now the war was over, required "wisdom, reason and law."

Member of Parliament Abdul-Karim Kabariti said it was up to the United States to protect Palestinians in Kuwait.

"The United States is responsible for what is going on in Kuwait

(Continued on page 5)

Seven Kuwaiti planes destroyed in bombing, Iraq informs U.N.

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Iraq told the United Nations in a letter circulated Tuesday that seven Kuwaiti civil aircraft it seized after the invasion of the emirate were destroyed by allied bombing and that six of eight remaining planes were now in Iran.

In another letter, Iraq said it agreed that Kuwaiti property should be handed back through the office of the U.N. secretary-general and that it was awaiting details of machinery for carrying this out.

In a third letter, Iraq said it was ready to hand over catalogues of the assets of Kuwait's Islamic museum and national museum that were taken to Iraq.

Concerning the Kuwaiti planes, Iraqi U.N. Representative Abdul Al Anbari listed the seven destroyed as a result of allied aerial bombardment as: two Airbus 300s; two Boeing 767s; one aircraft described only as a 125, and two as G-38.

Of the remaining eight Kuwaiti planes, he said one Airbus 300 and five Airbus 310s were in Iran, one Boeing 727 was in Oman and one 125 aircraft was in Iraq.

The Iraqi letter did not say when and under what circumstances the Kuwaiti planes were flown to Iran and Oman, but Iraqi pilots were reported earlier this year to have flown a large number of military and civil aircraft to Iran, presumably to avoid destruction during allied air attacks.

70,000 U.S. troops depart
About 70,000 U.S. soldiers

have left the Gulf since the war with Iraq ended but units holding Iraqi territory will remain poised for combat until a formal ceasefire, the U.S. military said Tuesday.

Lieutenant-Colonel Virginia Pribyla, spokeswoman for U.S. central command in Riyadh, said that 70,000 U.S. troops had left following a preliminary ceasefire agreement between Iraq and the allied coalition, leaving around 468,000 in the area.

"The redeployment is continuing but the major combat units are still in defensive positions and will remain so until we have a ceasefire — the withdrawal has not affected our combat capability," she told Reuters.

U.S. Army Secretary Michael Stone said in Dhahran Sunday American troops would still be in the Gulf in July and more soldiers were arriving to replace those who had left.

U.S. forces still occupy around 15 per cent of southern Iraq. Diplomats in the area say a formal ceasefire agreement may be delayed by weeks as Iraq struggles to put down rebellion in its northern and southern provinces.

Col. Pribyla said central command did not have figures available for the number of new U.S. troops that had arrived.

PoW return

Allied and Iraqi officials will meet soon to discuss speeding the return of Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs), a Red Cross spokesman said Tuesday as the latest group headed for Baghdad.

(Continued on page 5)

Officials claim Gorbachev success

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Mikhail Gorbachev's vision of a renewed Soviet federation won an "absolute majority" of votes in the country's first referendum, the election chairman told lawmakers Tuesday.

Vladimir Orlov, chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Referendum Committee, told fellow lawmakers that more than three-quarters of the vote counted so far had supported the position Mr. Gorbachev favoured.

No top leaders, including Mr. Gorbachev or his foe, Russian Federation leader Boris Yeltsin, have commented publicly on the vote, which was held Sunday.

Mr. Orlov told lawmakers that 41 per cent of the country's voting districts had reported as of Tuesday. In those districts, 82 per cent of the eligible voters cast ballots and 77.3 per cent of the voters said "yes" when asked: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal, sovereign republics in which human rights and freedoms of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?"

The results came from nine republics, including the vast Russian republic with half the country's population. Mr. Orlov said. The other six republics boycotted the vote.

Despite the partial results, Mr. Orlov said officials still felt able to conclude there was decisive support for holding the fragmenting country together.

"According to official information we are getting now, an absolute majority of our citizens has voted for preserving the union," Mr. Orlov told lawmakers in the ornate Supreme Soviet chamber.

But results coming in from across the country left little doubt the Kremlin chief had not obtained the massive backing he expected and that Mr. Yeltsin — who champions a different approach to unity — had emerged strengthened.

A spokesman for the office of Mr. Yeltsin, president of the parliament of the giant Russian Federation, said there had been huge "Yes" vote for a supplementary question clearing the way for him to bid to become its executive head of state.

Soviet analysts said there was little doubt the poll in the federation had become for many voters a test of popularity between Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Yeltsin, and that Mr. Yeltsin was coming "through strongly."

The Russian question asked voters whether they wanted a full president for the republic, which stretches from the Gulf of Finland to the Pacific Ocean, elected by direct popular ballot. Mr. Gorbachev was appointed Soviet

(Continued on page 3)

Baghdad says referendum on new constitution soon

Fighting dies down in south, rebel says battle continues in north

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraqis will vote soon in a referendum on a new constitution promised by President Saddam Hussein, the speaker of parliament, Saadi Mahdi Saleh, said in an interview published Tuesday.

"The new constitution is now in an advanced stage and the only remaining step is to put it to a referendum, which will take place soon," he told the newspaper Al Iraq, organ of the Kurdish Party.

In a speech last Saturday, President Saddam repeated promises of reforms to Iraq's system of government, dominated by the ruling Baath Party.

"Our decision to build a democratic society based on the constitution, the rule of law and political pluralism is... irrevocable," he said.

In addition to a referendum on the new constitution, President Saddam promised a government shake-up to rebuild Iraq after the Gulf war.

There was speculation that the National Assembly, due to hold an emergency session Wednesday, might discuss formation of a new government including technocrats drafted to oversee reconstruction.

No changes were expected to

the major portfolios such as foreign affairs, the interior and defence.

Speaking about the Gulf war, Mr. Saleh said Iraq had emerged victorious. "If victory lies in the fact that the 30-nation alliance could not deprive our people of the will of independence, the will of freedom to choose."

He said the situation was "getting better steadily..."

The Iraqi moves towards reforms come amid rebellions in the country's Shiite south and Kurdish north.

The Iraqi government has said that the rebellion in the south has been quashed and reports Tuesday spoke of continuing fighting in the north.

Kurdish rebels claimed they were in control of major parts of oil-rich Kirkuk Tuesday and anti-government rioting spread to Mosul.

Both rebels and government spokesmen said their side held the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

Both sides also made appeals that seemed at odds with past claims — the rebels' assertions of battlefield victories and Baghdad's declarations that foreign agents were carrying out the re-

bellion.

The government urged citizens to remain loyal and pledged to carry out the democratic reforms.

"Close ranks behind the leadership to overcome the dilemma," said an editorial in Al Thawra. "All Iraqis are duty-bound to... surmount this sick phenomenon."

Al Jumhuriyah said the unrest was a foreign-inspired conspiracy against Iraq.

"The nature of the sectarian strife reveals another chapter of the conspiracy against Iraq that is a continuation for the aggression launched by the imperialist, Western and Zionist forces," the paper said, referring to the six-week Gulf war.

The Shiite Dawa party issued a statement in London claiming that Iraqi forces fired Scud missiles at Najaf, killing 2,000 people. It said that army troops persisted in using helicopter gunships against rebels in Kirkuk "despite warning from the allied forces that such actions are contrary to the ceasefire."

The Iraqi Kurdistan Front said in London that rebel forces had seized a large part of the centre of

(Continued on page 5)

Reports conflict over Abu Sharif

TUNIS (Agencies) — Senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Abu Sharif denied a report Tuesday that he had resigned after being quoted as saying the PLO was ready to make concessions to Israel, the organisation said.

"It is false. There is no truth in it," a PLO official in Tunis quoted Mr. Abu Sharif, currently touring Europe, as saying.

The Egyptian news agency MENA said Mr. Abu Sharif, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's senior political adviser, had sent his resignation from London in response to criticism by PLO leaders.

There was a flurry of excitement last week over news reports quoting Mr. Abu Sharif as saying the PLO was about to unveil a new peace plan incorporating territorial concessions to Israel. Mr. Abu Sharif denied any concessions were planned.

Mr. Abu Sharif's aides said he had sent a videotape of his remarks on Britain's Sky television to PLO headquarters in Tunis. They denied he had been recalled from London.

However, the AP said later Tuesday that Mr. Abu Sharif had resigned for saying in the interview that the Palestinians would settle for a state that does not include the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Officials, interviewed in Tunis by telephone, by the AP in Nicosia, said Mr. Abu Sharif submitted his resignation last week.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the sources said Mr. Abu Sharif sent a letter to Mr. Arafat from Amman saying he was quitting. He then left the Jordanian capital for an undisclosed destination.

"The chairman has been trying to get hold of him, but he cannot locate him," said one of the sources.

They said it was not clear if Mr. Arafat would accept the resignation of Mr. Abu Sharif, who has been in the post since 1988.

Sky Television reported that Mr. Abu Sharif had outlined in an interview a four-point plan aimed at bringing Israel to the

(Continued on page 3)

Shamir rejects Palestinians who met Baker as peace partners

TEL AVIV (R) — Housing Minister Ariel Sharon pledged on Tuesday to double the Jewish population in the Golan Heights, reinforcing Israel's resistance to swapping occupied land for peace with the Arabs.

Leftist politicians accused the hardline Sharon of planning also to build homes for immigrants in the occupied West Bank, violating a pledge to the United States, Israel's crucial ally.

Israel has hardened its position just as Washington launches a Middle East peace campaign. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker said at the weekend that Jewish settlement of occupied territories was "de facto annexation."

On Monday Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Israel would not return the Golan Heights to Syria.

Mr. Sharon told reporters in northern Israel Tuesday: "We are in the process of building 1,200 housing units and I hope that next year we'll build another 1,200. All this is to increase the (Jewish) population in the Golan from 11,000 today to 20,000."

Damascus has said any peace negotiations must address Israeli withdrawal from the heights, officially "annexed" in 1981 and home also to some 15,000 Druze. Israel views this demand as an unacceptable precondition.

Leftist parliamentarian Dedi Zucker of the Citizens Rights Movement said Mr. Sharon had asked Jewish West Bank settlers to inform him where land was available for housing construction.

A movement spokesman said Mr. Zucker had documented "proof that Mr. Sharon's plans would violate a pledge to Mr. Baker not to build homes for the influx of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel. Washington has conditions aid for housing on the promise."

"Sharon wants to quickly establish facts on the ground," spokesman Moshe Horowitz said. He said Mr. Sharon had already provided settlement leaders with 158 mobile homes for newcomers. Some 100,000 Jews live in the occupied territories.

Mr. Sharon lambasted army chief Dan Shomron for suggest-

ing on Monday that the Jewish state could cede occupied territory for peace with Arabs (see page 2).

"He slipped into the underpants of politicians while still wearing a military rank on his shoulders. He should have waited at least until he left his post," said Mr. Sharon, 63, himself a warrior-turned-politician.

"Israel needs depth to defend itself — strategic depth — especially after the (Gulf) war," said Mr. Sharon, a former defence minister who orchestrated Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Mr. Shomron is due to retire from the army next month.

On Monday, Israel stiffened conditions for its withdrawal from a self-declared "security zone" it step up in South Lebanon.

Brigadier-General Micha Tamir, the new Israeli commander in the zone, said Israel would not quit Lebanon until Syria had done so, and a new government in Beirut replaced the "puppet regime taking orders from Damascus."

The conditions made an early Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon appear more unlikely.

16 injured in Israel air raid in South Lebanon

SIDON, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli warplanes attacked a Palestinian base near this southern port city Tuesday. Police said at least 16 people were wounded in the sixth air raid on Lebanon this year.

Police said the attack wounded 13 civilian Palestinians and three guerrillas of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC).

The target of the 2:10 p.m. (12:10 GMT) raid was a PFLP-GC base on the eastern edge of the 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp, police said.

He said four jet fighters carried out the raid, each firing one rocket at the one-store PFLP-GC base in Jabal Al Haleeb neighbourhood of 'Ain Al Hilweh.

"One of the rockets scored a

direct hit on the entrance to a tunnel that leads from the base to the mountain," a spokesman said.

"We can't tell if there are any casualties inside the tunnel," the spokesman said.

Witnesses reached by telephone told the AP smoke and dust billowed from the base as air raid sirens echoed across 'Ain Al Hilweh, the adjacent Mich Mieh refugee camp and Sidon.

Several civilian cars were wrecked in the raid near the Mich Mieh refugee camp on the edge of Sidon, 25 kilometres south of Beirut.

The raid came four days after Israeli warplanes struck at guerrillas of the Palestine Popular

(Continued on page 3)

Yugoslav army says it will not allow civil war

BELGRADE (Agencies) — The Yugoslav army said on Tuesday it would stop the country sliding into civil war but vowed not to interfere in political talks aimed at saving the Balkan federation.

"The Yugoslav army will under no circumstances allow armed inter-ethnic conflicts and civil war in Yugoslavia," the armed forces supreme command said in a statement after months of rising tension and street protests last week in Belgrade.

But it added: "The Yugoslav people's army as in the past, will not interfere in political talks on the country's future."

The army issued its statement to calm fears that it would impose emergency measures to restore order after the state presidency — the highest constitutional authority — was stripped of

decision-making powers on Monday.

But the statement appeared to leave the door open to military action if tensions among the six republics and two provinces increased.

Serbia and Croatia, the two biggest republics and historic rivals, have already mobilised police and military reserves.

Many Yugoslavs and diplomats fear the army could try to act on its own to keep order after the presidency rejected its proposals last week to impose emergency measures to end mounting disorder in Serbia.

The presidency — a collective group composed of representatives of the eight constituent parts — called on Monday for talks

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Palestinians disappearing, some tortured, in Kuwait

By Paul Taylor
Reuters

KUWAIT — Nearly three weeks after U.S.-led allied forces entered Kuwait, dozens of Palestinians are disappearing into a secret web of interrogation, torture, detention, deportation and in a few cases death, witnesses and relief officials say.

Many Kuwaitis accuse Palestinians of collaborating with the Iraqi army during its seven-month occupation of Kuwait. In an atmosphere of virtual gun law, some are now taking organised or random revenge.

Palestinians are picked up checkpoints manned by the Kuwaiti army and resistance or taken from hospitals and homes, human rights workers say. Some are taken to police stations, others to schools converted into interrogation centres.

After an ordeal of hours, days or weeks, some have been shot dead and buried in unmarked graves, according to Arab medical workers and

gravediggers who say they saw the bodies.

Kuwaiti ministers and army officers say they are aware of individual acts of revenge but deny there is any systematic campaign of abuses.

"I don't think purposely organised torture by the government is taking place at all," Abdul Rahman Al Awadi, minister of state for cabinet affairs, told reporters. "But I won't be surprised if there is some hard handling for personal reasons."

He said the government was trying to reestablish the rule of law and planned to bring accused collaborators to trial.

While expressing anger at the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which backed Iraq in the Gulf war, ministers insist they do not sanction reprisals against Palestinians in Kuwait — about 170,000 remaining from a total of some 400,000 before Iraq's invasion last August.

At Al Riqqa cemetery in a southern Kuwait City suburb, the register shows at least 80 unidentified bodies have been

buried since Iraqi forces were expelled from Kuwait.

Most had been shot in the head at close range, a gravedigger said. Some bore signs of torture, with fingerprints missing, faces disfigured and burn-marks on the body.

While many may have been killed by the Iraqis, some had died since the liberation, the gravedigger said. Most recently, 12 unidentified men aged between 15 and 30, most bearing signs of torture, were buried in a mass grave at Al Riqqa Sunday.

At another cemetery, in the Sulaybiyah district, the Kuwait director said families had come looking for missing relatives but he denied any Palestinians had been brought for burial.

However an employee followed me to my car and volunteered that a young Palestinian shot in the head had been buried there last Thursday.

"We are afraid to speak," he whispered before slipping away.

A medical worker at the big Mubarak Al Kabeer hospital in the mainly-Palestinian Hawalli district said he saw police de-

liver the body of another Palestinian to the casualty ward on Sunday with two bullets through the head.

A Western human rights worker said he saw the bodies of two other Palestinians shot at point-blank range, still lying where they had been killed in the street.

A senior Palestinian who was arrested by soldiers and held for 12 days told Reuters he shared cells with at least 60 Palestinians and a few Iraqi civilians in three different detention centres.

He said most had been severely beaten and had broken noses, facial cuts, bruises and cigarette burns on their bodies. Some had been shot in the legs and could not walk.

Although blindfolded while being moved, he said he believed he was held first in a police station basement, then in a school and finally in a military prison on the outskirts of Kuwait City, from which he was freed last week.

On his first night in detention, a guard sprayed machinegun fire in his cell, grazing his head, said the

Palestinian, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals.

"They majority of Palestinians are just waiting to get their money out of the bank and leave," he said. "We built and modernised this country. It was a desert when we came here."

Some detainees are apparently being held and treated inside hospitals.

Soldiers have sealed off the orthopaedic ward of Mubarak Al Kabeer hospital. Witnesses said soldiers kept wounded detainees in ward 18 of the Farwaniyah hospital until the International Committee of the Red Cross inspected the clinic on Sunday.

Many Palestinian doctors and nurses have been suspended from work. At least seven doctors are missing and presumed in detention.

Diplomats said U.S. Ambassador Edward Gnehm had complained to Kuwaiti ministers about the treatment of Palestinians and the dumping of dozens of foreigners, including Iraqis, Jordanians,

Sudanese and Egyptians, across the border in allied-held Iraqi territory.

A State Department official said Monday that "rogue elements operating in Kuwait" were responsible for that action and the U.S. and Kuwait governments were equally disturbed about it.

A senior European diplomat in Kuwait said the maltreatment of Palestinians was his biggest concern.

While understanding Kuwait anger at the PLO and at individual who participated in looting or were informants for the Iraqi secret police, he said most Palestinians remained loyal to Kuwait and helped keep the country running during the occupation.

A medic at Mubarak Al Kabeer Hospital summed up the sense of helplessness in the Palestinian community.

"I can cope with the pain of being beaten, the hard part is being humiliated without guilt, just because of your nationality," he said.

"God made me a Palestinian. It's not my fault."

Shomron: Israel could swap land for peace

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's army chief, in remarks bound to cause an outcry from the political right, has suggested that Israel could exchange land for peace with Arabs.

Lieutenant-General Dan Shomron said the value of territory changed when countries passed from war to peace.

"I want to say that a political arrangement, when it exists, is far more than (just) territory. It is linked to limiting weapons, supervision of one country over (another) country. It involves many things," he said.

"Thus if you are talking about countries at war, without a doubt territory has very great significance. But when you talk about other types of arrangements, it is clear that these include various elements which diminish the threat and offer the possibility, for example, of long-range early warning."

General Shomron was speaking to Israeli military reporters at a news conference before his retirement this month.

Earlier Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Israel would not return the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for peace.

Mr. Shamir faces stiff pressure from hardline members of his Likud Party and right-wing parties in his coalition government to reject "territorial concessions."

His remark after a stormy session of a parliamentary committee followed right-wing charges that Health Minister Ehud Olmert had suggested in a U.S. speech that Israel was prepared to negotiate the future of the strategic plateau.

The Prime minister, who has rejected U.S. calls to trade land

for peace, said Mr. Olmert's view that the Jewish state could meet Syria in talks without preconditions did not mean any acceptance of Damascus's position.

"They could say to us 'we want the Golan Heights' and we'll say 'we won't give it to you'," Mr. Shamir told reporters. "So here are your negotiations."

Mr. Shamir said he could discuss peace and economic cooperation with Syria but no country would negotiate "on territories that belong to one of them."

To underscore his determination to hold the plateau that overlooks the Syrian plain to the north and the Sea of Galilee to the west, Mr. Shamir's office issued a formal statement saying "there is no consideration of changing or cancelling" the 1981 law that annexed the region.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, a hardliner, was reported to have called on Sunday for Israel effectively to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli newspapers said Mr. Sharon told a cabinet meeting that Israeli law should be formally extended to all Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. He said it would prevent formation of a Palestinian state.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who was in Israel last week to test chances for Israeli-Arab peace, condemned Israeli settlement policy in a television interview Sunday.

Since 1967 Israel has settled some 150,000 Jews in Arab Jerusalem to ensure permanent control. Another 100,000 Jews have moved into the West Bank and Gaza Strip and about 10,000 into the Golan Heights.

UNRWA: Palestinian refugees still suffering from Gulf war

VIENNA (R) — Palestinian refugees in the Israeli-occupied territories are still suffering daily hardship from extra restrictions imposed during the Gulf war, the head of a United Nations relief agency said.

After Tuermen, commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), said extra curfews imposed by Israeli security forces during the Gulf war were still causing enormous disruption to daily life for refugees.

"The curfews are very erratic — you just never know when there will be one," said Mr. Tuermen who last week visited the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I saw a camp which had an all-day curfew. It was a camp, and so it was already enclosed, but even inside this camp, they couldn't go out of their homes," he said in an interview on Mon-

day.

UNRWA, which is based in Vienna, runs schools, health centres and training programmes for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The agency began emergency food deliveries to 295,000 families last month after day curfews imposed in addition to existing night curfews prevented people going shopping.

Later UNRWA distributed thousands of gas masks donated by Western countries to protect residents of the occupied territories from rocket attacks aimed at Israel from Iraq — a task the agency said was really the responsibility of Israel.

Although two UNRWA adult training centres have reopened, Mr. Tuermen said all schools and universities were still closed.

One of the main things we want is that all universities and schools should open," Mr. Tuermen

said.

"This has grave consequences for the future and we have to try to avoid the creation of a frustrated generation."

UNRWA's health centres remained open throughout the Gulf war, but curfews prevented many people from visiting them.

UNRWA spokesman Emil Prych said food shortages were severe in the occupied territories and UNRWA planned to continue emergency aid deliveries.

"We will try to guarantee 1,000 calories a day for the next three months," Mr. Prych said.

He added that before the Gulf war many refugees had relied on extra funds sent by wealthier Palestinian relatives working in the Gulf region but who had now lost their jobs.

"Now the situation is very unclear as many people haven't been earning for half a year now," Mr. Prych said.

Israel increasing Jewish in Golan Heights settlements

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has dismissed the 10 Palestinians who met U.S. Secretary of State James Baker as prospective negotiating partners, "because they say they represent the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation)," an aide said Tuesday.

The stand poses a new obstacle to Middle East peace efforts, as those Arabs who saw Mr. Baker in occupied Jerusalem on March 12 have long been considered by the U.S. as potential negotiators.

Israel has also never ruled out any specific Palestinians for peace talks, although it has repeatedly refused dialogue with the PLO.

Most of the Palestinians who met Mr. Baker are moderate supporters of the PLO's mainstream Fatah movement, such as Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij and leading Jerusalemite Faisal Husseini.

Membership in the PLO is illegal in the Israeli-occupied territories and Israel rejects the organisation as a "terrorist" group.

Mr. Shamir said Monday: "In my opinion, the representatives

who met with Baker are PLO. They came in the name of the PLO, they express PLO positions... Israel will not negotiate with the PLO."

"We could talk until the end of time but there would be no results," Mr. Shamir added. He spoke after briefing parliament's defence and foreign affairs committee on peace moves.

Mr. Shamir's top aide Avi Pazner clarified Tuesday that Mr. Shamir would have "no dealings" with these delegates, "because they say they represent the PLO."

Mr. Pazner denied Mr. Shamir had hardened Israel's negotiating stance. He said the premier decided to rule out the Arabs who met Mr. Baker, because they said the meeting was convened with PLO approval.

"We are seeking delegate who don't represent the PLO," Mr. Pazner added.

Last year Mr. Shamir met a leading pro-PLO businessman from the West Bank town of Ramallah, Jamil Tarifi, during an attempt to find negotiators. Mr. Tarifi was not at the Baker meet-

ing.

Foreign Minister David Levy told visiting U.S. congressmen Tuesday that Palestinians had to disavow links with the PLO before they could join peace talks, Israel Radio said.

The Palestinians who met Mr. Baker responded angrily to Mr. Shamir.

"Shamir proves that the word peace has no meaning in his mind or in his character," said Saeb Erakat, a pro-PLO political scientist.

"If Shamir wants to choose his own representatives among Palestinian then it is like he's trying to talk to himself," said Mr. Freij.

Zahira Kamal, a women's leader, Hanan Ashrawi, an English lecturer at Bir Zeit University, and Hajdar Abdul Shafi, head of the Red Crescent in the Gaza Strip, were other prominent leaders who met Mr. Baker.

Mr. Baker met the Palestinians as an attempt to promote Israel's plan for an interim period of autonomy or limited self-rule for Palestinians.

Kuwait elements dump Palestinians, others — U.S.

WASHINGTON (R) — "Rogue elements" in Kuwait have dumped dozens of Palestinians and other foreigners at the Iraqi border in apparent reprisal for alleged collaboration with the government of Saddam Hussein, a U.S. official said Monday.

"There are rogue elements operating in Kuwait" which are responsible for the deportations, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Washington, however, does not intend U.N. forces to be a substitute for a U.S. presence in the region, such as naval forces in the Gulf and the pre-positioning of supplies in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, a position bound to be criticised by some council members.

But a major problem, diplomats said, was the return of Kuwaitis abducted by Iraqi forces, which Kuwait insists number over 33,000.

Allies are considering giving the International Committee of the Red Cross a central role of arbitrating between the Kuwaiti and the Iraqi versions of the numbers of dead and captured before any permanent ceasefire is honoured.

Kuwait also wants its borders with Iraq clearly demarcated.

the future, Kuwait's government has sent Justice Ministry officials to the border to establish a civilian government presence there, the official said.

In addition to the problem of deporting foreigners from Kuwait, there are hundreds of foreigners who spent the war inside Iraq who have been improperly barred from leaving the country through Kuwait, the official said.

Last week, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the Kuwaiti government had assured Gnehm that it did not condone such abuse of Palestinians and others, and dismissed media reports of such abuses as isolated incidents.

Mr. Boucher said Monday that the insurgency inside Iraq following the Gulf war has damaged the Muslim shrines at the cities of Najaf and Karbala.

He declined to give specifics, but a senior U.S. official called the damage "significant and noteworthy."

During the war, Iraq had accused the United States of damaging the shrines at Najaf and Karbala, which contain the tombs of the Prophet Moham-

mad's son-in-law and grandson, respectively. The U.S. government denied this.

Mr. Boucher said heavy fighting continued in northern Iraq between Iraqi forces and Kurdish dissidents.

"Kurdish dissidents now appear to control large portions of predominantly Kurdish areas of northern and northeastern Iraq," Mr. Boucher said at a briefing.

Insurgents and government forces were also fighting in the south along the lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers and near Najaf and Karbala, Mr. Boucher said.

He said some reports indicated the cities of Erbil and Sulaimaniya may be held by rebel forces, while others suggest the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul are "more or less" in government hands.

Asked whether the United States was aiding the insurgents, Mr. Boucher repeated comments made by Secretary of State James Baker Sunday in a television interview. "We are not in the process of assisting through provisioning arms to these groups that are in uprising against the current government," Mr. Baker said.

Security Council expected to discuss ceasefire by end of week

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council is expected to discuss informally a draft resolution on tough terms for a permanent ceasefire in the Gulf war, before the end of the week, including new conditions on containing chemical weapons.

U.S. diplomats said Monday they hoped the full council would be able to meet by Thursday although they admitted the five permanent members — the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China — were far from completing work on the draft.

Usually the five announce broad agreement — or in the case of China, agreement not to veto a resolution — before the other 10

council members obtain the draft.

Britain for the past week has urged the draft include measures to eliminate Iraq's store of chemical and biological weapons and prevent it from getting new ones.

After the five met late Friday, diplomats told Reuters China had problems with the scope of the British proposals while U.S. officials were concerned about how the council could supervise the destruction of the arsenal, a condition not in previous resolutions against Iraq.

Another stumbling point is a complicated timetable for lifting stringent U.N. trade sanctions against Iraq to take into account proposals for a possible arms embargo.

Several members of the council are anxious an embargo against foodstuffs be lifted as soon as possible while others want to tie future oil revenues to war damages.

"It's still unclear how or when," said one Western diplomat on the council.

Currently the five are discussing a token U.N. peacekeeping force of about 250 military observers rather than a more substantial group as first suggested among allies after U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq.

Washington, however, does not intend U.N. forces to be a substitute for a U.S. presence in the region, such as naval forces in the Gulf and the pre-positioning of supplies in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, a position bound to be criticised by some council members.

But a major problem, diplomats said, was the return of Kuwaitis abducted by Iraqi forces, which Kuwait insists number over 33,000.

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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES 06:19 Fajr 05:37 (Sunrise) Dhuha 11:43 Dhuh 15:10 'Asr 17:58 Maghrib 19:08 Isha		CHURCHES St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifeth, Tel. 61740 Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 62778 St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627400 De la Salle Church Tel. 661757 Terranova Church Tel. 623360 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541 Anglican Church Tel. 623363, Tel.		WEATHER Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Temperatures will rise and some clouds will appear at different altitudes. Winds will be light and variable, turning to southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moder-		USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS AMMAN: Dr. Adnan Al Zughoul 898140 Dr. Yousef Sammour 615648 Dr. Jamal Abu Baker 746426		NIGHT DUTY AMMAN: Dr. Adnan Al Zughoul 898140 Dr. Yousef Sammour 615648 Dr. Jamal Abu Baker 746426		EMERGENCIES Food Control Centre 637111 Civil Defence Department 661111		ADDITIONAL NUMBERS Dr. Abdul Qader Al Lala 696048 Firas Pharmacy 661912 Fardous pharmacy 778326 Al Asena pharmacy 637055 Nairoh pharmacy 623672 Al Salam pharmacy 636730 Yacoub pharmacy 644945 Shmeisani pharmacy 637660		CIVIL DEFENCE Immediate 630341 Rescue 199 Civil Defence Emergency 199 Fire Brigade 621111, 637777 Blood Bank 771228 Highway Police 843402 Traffic Police 896390 Public Security Department 630221 Hotel Complaints 605800 Price Complaints 661176		HOSPITALS AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 813812/32 Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 642816 Akhla Maternity, J. Amn. 642412 Jabel Amman Maternity 636140 Malhas, J. Amman 636140 Palestine, Shmeisani 669131 Shmeisani Hospital 842845 University Hospital 642845 Al-Mashar Hospital 662727/9 The Islamic, Abdas 666127/37 Al-Abil, Abdal 6641646		MARKET PRICES Upper/lower price in lbs per kg. Banana 500 / 430 Banana (Mukammal) 450 / 400 Beans 950 / 850		MARKET PRICES Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3 Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77111/26 Army, Marfa 891611/75 Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50 Amal Hospital 815615 ZARQA: Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071 Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732 IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)278555 Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775 The Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100 AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111		MARKET PRICES Cabbage 100 / 50 Carrot 220 / 180 Cauliflower 200 / 150 Cucumbers (large) 300 / 250 Cucumbers (small) 500 / 400 Dates 500 / 400 Eggplant 280 / 200 Garlic 600 / 500 Grapefruit 250 / 200 Lemon 320 / 270 Lettuce (per org) 150 / 100 Marrow (large) 250 / 180 Marrow (small) 400 / 340 Onion (dry) 280 / 220 Onion (green) 600 / 500 Orange 180 / 120 Pepper (hot) 800 / 700 Pepper (sweet) 340 / 260 Potato 250 / 180 Radish 120 / 80 Sage 400 / 300 Spinach 120 / 80 Tomatoes 420 / 330	
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Health Ministry warns of unfit drugs on market

By Ithar Khasawneh
Petra

AMMAN — The Health Ministry disclosed Tuesday that certain types of unregistered drugs which do not conform to local or international specifications have recently found their way into the Jordanian markets.

The Ministry of Health confiscated the smuggled medicine and arrested those involved in the illicit trade, according to pharmacist Nayef Hamarneh, director of the Health Ministry's Pharmacy and Drug Control Department.

"Jordanian pharmaceutical products are of very high quality and are being marketed in many countries, and they also cover nearly 40 per cent of the total local needs," he said.

"It is this department's duty to control the flow of incoming and outgoing drugs, the department is concerned with providing the citizens with the best available drugs," Mr. Hamarneh said.

"Last year Jordan's four pharmaceutical firms sold a total of JD 35.177 million worth of Jordanian medicine to other countries and met the local markets' requirements of drugs," Mr. Hamarneh said.

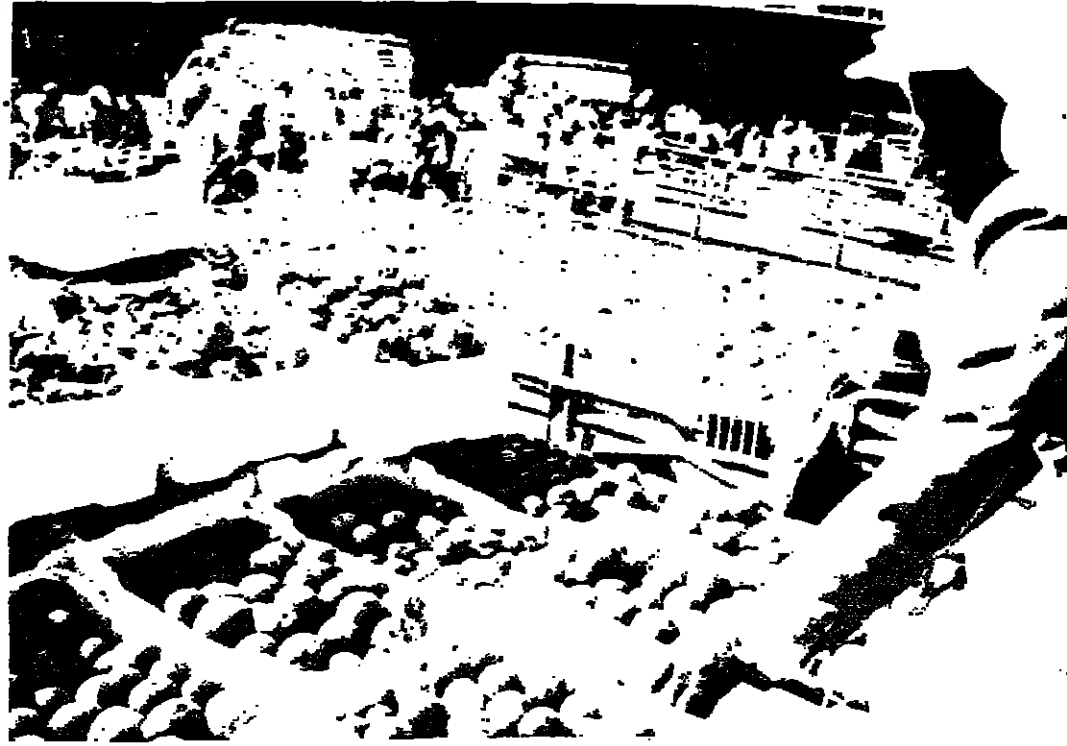
He said that the private and the

public sectors were maintaining close cooperation so as to keep the local markets supplied with all types of drugs and that the present drug situation in the Kingdom can be described as good as there is no shortage of medicines in the local pharmacies.

Jordan sells drugs through its 663 pharmacies which are constantly subjected to inspection and control with regard to prices, specifications of drugs and others. "Control is carried out by teams from the Health Ministry which also follow up affairs pertaining to 1,750 pharmacists, of whom 420 are from the occupied West Bank," Mr. Hamarneh pointed out.

"The Health Ministry also controls dangerous drugs at the disposal of the local pharmacies, examines samples of all types of imported and locally manufactured drugs, conducts research work to determine specifications of drugs, takes responsibility of drug registration processes and fixes the prices in cooperation with the local drug stores," Mr. Hamarneh added.

For this highly technical task, he said, the Ministry of Health has employed experienced pharmacists and specialists.



Greater demand during Ramadan makes the prices of vegetables and fruits soar (file photo)

Rise in produce prices due to demand, poor crops — official

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Ministry of Supply says that it is doing all it can to make available in the local markets most of the items demanded by the public, especially agricultural products and meat during the holy month of Ramadan.

Ministry Secretary-General Radi Ibrahim told Jordan Television Monday evening that the present rise in the prices of certain types of vegetables was due to the fact that Jordan was still passing through the transitional period between winter and summer, and only limited quantities of agricultural products, especially tomatoes and cucumbers, reach the local markets.

Merchants or customers, interviewed by Jordan Television on the same programme, differed in views with Mr. Ibrahim arguing that the rise in prices of almost everything was normal for the month of Ramadan when the

demand is bigger and prices rise.

For instance, they said that a kilogramme of tomatoes which sold for 350 fils one day before the beginning of Ramadan went up as high as 550 fils on the first day of the holy month, three days ago.

A woman customer interviewed on the programme said that she could not buy fruits and vegetables for the family as the prices of nearly everything went up with the beginning of Ramadan. She called for government intervention to put an end to the chaos in prices.

Mr. Ibrahim's views were backed by Ayed Al Wirr, director general of the Jordan Agricultural Marketing and Processing Company (JAMPCO), who said that the reason behind the rise in prices, especially of tomatoes and citrus fruit, was mainly due to the very limited quantities reaching the market.

In addition, the past agricultural season witnessed some setbacks

when many types of crops were hit by disease, consequently reducing the amounts of crops produced, especially tomatoes, Dr. Wirr said.

He said that only 30 per cent of the total citrus fruit harvest survived the disease, causing a noticeable rise in the price of oranges, grapefruit, lemons and others.

Dr. Wirr denied that the rise in prices was due to exports as exports have now halted because the traditional markets in the Gulf region have stopped purchasing Jordanian products.

He said that the demand and supply was a major factor in determining the prices of the available products in the local markets.

According to the Ministry of Supply, the country has sufficient quantities of frozen meat, poultry and fish, and there is no need for rush or stockpiling during the month of Ramadan.

Fundamentalist activists held for illegal actions

AMMAN (AP) — Police raided the headquarters of two fundamentalist Islamic factions and arrested at least 11 members, including two accused of planning an attack last week on Israel, Muslim activists and officials reported Monday.

The two arrested in connection with the infiltration into Israel on March 11 were the sons of Assad Bayyoud Tamimi, spiritual leader of Islamic Jihad-Beit Al Maqdes, a senior member of the group said.

Six armed Jordanian infiltrators were killed and three Israeli troops were wounded in the infiltration south of the Tirt Zvi collective farm in northern Israel. The farm is about 72 kilometres northeast of Jerusalem.

The Islamic Jihad-Beit Al Maqdes faction, formed 10 years ago, advocates the eradication of the Jewish state.

The party source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said police raided the headquarters of Islamic Jihad-Beit Al Maqdes in a Palestinian neighbourhood in Amman on Sunday and arrested Tareq and Muhammad Tamimi.

"Police raided our offices, their homes and confiscated some personal weapons," the source said. He said the arms belonged to bodyguards and included three Soviet-made Kalashnikovs and three pistols.

"Police also confiscated our communication equipment, including the telefax system, three telephones, typewriters and other machines," the source said.

A Jordanian security official, who cannot be named under regulations, confirmed the arrest report and said the communications equipment was "deemed illegal since the party in question is not licensed and prohibited from

printing political material."

The official said that in a second raid some members of Al-Tahrir, or liberation party, were also arrested and charged with "violating Jordan's print and publications laws."

Spokesman of Al-Tahrir Party, Atta Abu Rushteh, said that nine members of his group were arrested this week and accused of distributing leaflets in the street.

"Six men were arrested and will be taken to court this week; two are being interrogated at the Intelligence Department and one has been tried by a martial court and sentenced to 18 months in prison," Rushteh said in an interview.

While the use of martial law has been drastically cut back in Jordan since the parliamentary elections of 1989, it is still used in cases related to the Kingdom's national security.

UNICEF officials foresee health disaster in Iraq

AMMAN (AP) — The "clock is ticking" on efforts to prevent a major health disaster in Iraq but it can be done, UNICEF officials said Tuesday.

One official estimated there had been no more than 1,500 civilian war casualties, excluding the southern port city of Basra, which is still closed because of internal rebellion.

Both described the residents of Baghdad as being in shock, unaware of the extent of ruin in which their nation lies.

"It is now a pre-industrial country," said Richard Reid, the regional director in the Middle East and North Africa for the United Nations Children's Fund.

"The big problem is there is no energy. That's the mother of all problems," said Reid, who returned recently from Baghdad.

He and R. Gianni Murzi, the UNICEF representative for Iraq, briefed reporters on efforts to control communicable diseases, improve nutrition and provide safe drinking water.

Murzi, who just returned after a month in Baghdad, said \$2 million worth of chlorine and alum to purify water, spare parts, electric generators and other equipment were being shipped to Iraq.

"This is going to be a rolling operation," said Murzi, who had

pulled out of the capital after the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

I am upset because we can make a difference. We have experience. We have the right people, and we put our hands in the dirt," he said.

The officials said 90 per cent of the drinking water in Iraq now comes from rivers contaminated by sewage because sanitation systems were destroyed during the war.

Seventy-per cent of Baghdad is getting some water, but with insufficient health guarantees, he said.

The UNICEF goal is to supply daily 10 to 50 litres of sanitary water per person, he said.

"We can really hear the clock ticking," Reid said. He said it must be done before the end of the first week of April. Then temperatures begin to rise to summer highs of 50 degrees centigrade creating ideal conditions for water-borne disease to spread.

Reid said Murzi said so far there had been no reports of cholera or typhoid, as had been feared, but diarrhoea had increased 100 per cent. That presents a danger of dehydration, especially in infants.

Neither official said he had seen civilian war casualties in any of the hospitals they had visited.

Reid said he believed precision allied bombing had helped keep figures lower than estimates that have run into the tens of thousands.

"Excluding Basra, I would guess that total casualties did not exceed 1,500, including the American shelter" struck in a February bombing raid on Baghdad, Reid said.

UNICEF has not been allowed in Basra to assess water sanitation and other health needs.

"We would guess the conditions in Basra are worst of all," Reid said.

There is food in Baghdad, including lentils, cucumbers, tomatoes, some wheat flour and bread, Reid and Murzi said. But people are getting less than the required 1,000 calories a day.

Inflation is staggering, with meat costing more than \$20 per half kilogramme and gasoline \$26 a litre, they said.

Reid said people in Baghdad are "in severe shock."

"They're like victims of automobile accidents in the hospital," he said. "They can feel the fingers, the phantom limbs are there. They believe they could win in the Olympic games."

He said it would cost up to \$1 million to restore the water system in Baghdad to acceptable levels.

JLA eager to promote profession, services to public

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Library Association (JLA) plans to hold a general conference for Jordanian librarians in the last quarter of 1991 in order to discuss ways to promote the profession of librarians and their service to the public, according to JLA President Anwar Akroush.

He said that this year the JLA started setting up public libraries for municipalities at Deir Youssef, Mazra, Shamali, Shajara and Mu'ab in a bid to expand the library service to the rural as well as the urban regions of Jordan.

"In the past year, the JLA organised nine training courses for new librarians to orient them on work in classification and indexing and the use of computers to store information and other types of library work," Mr. Akroush said.

He said the JLA, which was established in 1963, had conducted a general survey of all the libraries at the community colleges in Jordan and stayed in constant touch with public libraries



Anwar Akroush

ies which exist in all main towns and cities.

"The most significant achievement of the JLA was the publication of 'the national bibliography' in 1989, a task that took years to accomplish," Mr. Akroush pointed out.

"The national bibliography,"

he said, is considered as the main source of information about Jordan's cultural heritage; it presents the researchers with a comprehensive knowledge about publications and authors in Jordan as well as university theses.

In all, he said, the bibliography contains 3,631 titles, of which 3,021 are in Arabic.

According to Mr. Akroush, JLA maintains strong contacts with its counterparts in Sudan and Syria and since last May it has initiated cooperation with the Iraqi Library Association.

He said that the JLA took part in the Tunis international book exhibition organised last March; last week the JLA organised an exhibition of Jordanian books and paintings at the Royal Cultural Centre, with the proceeds benefiting the Iraqi people.

Mr. Akroush said that the JLA, which groups 500 Jordanian librarians, was striving to develop library work in cooperation with local, Arab and international organisations and libraries.

Palestinian ambassador calls for lifting embargo on Iraq

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The ambassador of Palestine to Iraq Azzam Al Ahmad Tuesday called for lifting the embargo imposed on Iraq and appealed to the Arab countries which advocated an inter-Arab solution to the Gulf crisis to support Iraq politically, following their failure to support it militarily.

Mr. Al Ahmad, who was addressing an audience of more than 1,000 people at the Professional Associations Complex, said that a number of Palestinians, enlisted with the Iraqi army were killed in the military operations, including a brigadier, who was recruited by the Iraqi military engineering corps, while fighting against the U.S.-led forces near the month of Safwan.

Speaking on the situation of Palestinians in Iraq, Mr. Al Ahmad said that a committee, comprising representatives of the Palestinian Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as members from the Palestinian Embassy in

Kuwait, was formed to make the necessary arrangements with the Kuwaiti authorities to ensure the safety of Palestinians.

He said that the Palestinians will overcome this problems, as they did before, during other crisis.

Speaking about the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Mr. Al Ahmad said it was completed under the cover of Iraqi artillery and rockets. He said that the long-range Iraqi artillery and rocket launchers had fired more than 250,000 bombs and missiles to cover up for the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces. This has contributed to the successful withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, a fact that was testified by senior Soviet and American officials, according to the ambassador. Mr. Al Ahmad said that the Iraqis would soon release the figures of their casualties and those of their enemies.

The Iraqi army, he said, has fought without any Iraqi air cover, because radar stations were disrupted. However, he added, Iraqis have lost around 40 fighter planes, while the allied forces lost 93 planes.

The air and ground battles had failed, during the first three days, to deal a deadly blow to the Iraqi armed forces, and that is why the allied forces started hitting civil targets, the ambassador said.

He criticised Arab countries for failing to extend military support for Iraq, saying that the absence of Arab support for Iraq was one of the reasons that led the Iraqis to accept a ceasefire in the hostilities.

He confirmed that Israeli pilots flew American fighters, which raided Iraq, adding that cruise missiles were launched from Naqab desert on Iraq.

He criticised the Cairo summit, which was held without any preparations unlike the other Arab summits, saying that such an abrupt summit was decided upon by the Saudis and others a pretext to seek the help of foreign forces and to implement the American plot, aimed at destroying Iraq. He said that America had exercised pressures on Iraq since Feb. 1990, when it banned the exportation of wheat to Iraq.

TCC conducts survey

AMMAN (J.T.) — Almost 71 per cent of Jordanian telephone contacts with destinations abroad and 88 per cent of the subscribers are aware of the fact that the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) charges reduced rates for night calls, according to the results of a survey of telephone callers conducted by Yarmouk University.

The survey, organised by Dr. Farouk Halalshah, and Dr. Mohammad Muhtaseb, said that they directed questions about the use of telephones in Jordan to 340 subscribers in various governorates.

The questions revolved around the subscribers' views about the telephone service in general and the facilities given by the TCC for night callers and the suggestions they would like to give to the TCC for improving the service, the two organisers said.

The survey showed that 66.7 per cent of the subscribers were aware of the number of local telephone calls they can make. According to TCC rules each subscriber is allowed 1,000 local telephone calls annually.

British Council to reopen library, resume services

By Debbie Lovatt
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The British Council will reopen its library Saturday and resume its other services gradually, within the Ramadan schedule. The council was closed for the duration of the recent Gulf war.

Miles Roddis, the director of the British Council in Amman, said "there is no reason why we shouldn't resume a full programme but it will be modest because of Ramadan and then Easter."

Apart from the library, the British Council offers language courses in English and colloquial Arabic and organises lectures and video showings.

Three weeks of spring term were lost due to the closure, but it is hoped that these will be made up.

"We are hoping to complete the lost part of the term, but if we can't then we will reduce the fees for the next term to compensate for the money lost due to the curtailed term," explained Mr. Roddis.

Arab students studying English have had to suffer the inconvenience of the British Council being shut but most have not lost out on

work towards an important examination. The council offers the University of Cambridge first certificate in English for the highest level only. The majority of students range from beginners' level to intermediate.

The British Council remained closed after the Christmas holidays for security reasons. British members of staff were requested to leave on the advice of the British and Commonwealth Office in London and the British Embassy in Amman.

"There will always be a threat (to security) even in the most normal times, but throughout this difficult period there was only one hoax telephone call and nothing else," said Mr. Roddis.

By the end of this week all the British Council's foreign staff will have returned from Britain. All staff were paid their regular wages during the closed period and none has found employment elsewhere.

Other cultural centres in Amman remained open throughout the Gulf crisis and the 42-day Gulf war. The French Cultural Centre did not close even though on the night of Jan. 30 its library was almost completely destroyed by a fire started by arson.

Gorbachev

(Continued from page 1)

president by parliament.

An official of the Russian electoral commission told Reuters with almost half of the results in that approval of the proposal was running at 71 per cent. In Mr. Yeltsin's home base, Sverdlovsk in the Urals, it was 86 per cent.

If confirmed, this result would boost the one-third communist and now radical standard-bearer in his bid to hold elections for a Russian presidency, in which he would almost certainly come out winner.

In its turn, this would strengthen his drive to break the last seven decades of central control from the Kremlin.

Air raid

(Continued from page 1)

Struggle Front in the Bekaa Valley of east Lebanon, wounding seven.

By police count, 11 people were killed and 48 wounded in the five previous Israeli air attacks into Lebanon this year. Israel carried out 21 air raids on Lebanon in 1990, killing 40 people and wounding 82.

This week's attacks followed a peace mission by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker to Israel and Syria last week and the reported killing by Israeli troops of six guerrilla infiltrators.

Lebanese troops and Israeli-backed militiamen clashed for an hour earlier on Tuesday in the first exchange of fire since the

army moved to the south last month, a military statement said.

Security sources said four militiamen in the South Lebanon Army (SLA) were wounded in shooting after an SLA patrol set off a mine when it advanced out of the Israeli-declared "security zone" in the south.

The 3,000-strong SLA, backed by an estimated 1,000 Israeli soldiers, holds the border "security zone" which runs up to 15 kilometres into Lebanese territory and was set up in 1985.

Lebanon wants an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the south. Thousands of troops moved up to the "security zone" in February as part of a plan to end nearly 16 years of civil war.

Government sources said the Lebanese government would discuss on Wednesday a plan to disband Lebanon's militias.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates Tunisia

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday sent a congratulatory cable to Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, congratulating him on his country's national day, and wishing him continued good health and the Tunisian people further progress and prosperity.

Ambassadors present credentials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three newly appointed ambassadors to Jordan presented their credentials to His Majesty King Hussein at Raghadan Palace in separate ceremonies Monday. These are Mohammad Al Taher Banani, of Morocco, Theodore Pantzaris, of Greece, and Laslo Kadar of Hungary. The ceremonies were attended by Chief of the Royal Court Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief Chamberlain Prince Raad Ben Zeid and Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri.

Cabinet endorses regulations

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet Tuesday endorsed a number of regulations, including the regulation on the salaries and allowances of the University of Jordan staff, and the regulation regarding the teaching staff of Yarmouk University. The Cabinet also approved the revised law for Yarmouk University's administrative and technical staff.

Abu Taleb thanks company for contribution

AMMAN (Petra) — Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Fathi Abu Taleb Tuesday voiced appreciation to Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company for its generous contribution of JD 50,000 to the People's Army. In a message to the company, Gen. Abu Taleb said this true and nationalistic position was the object of pride and appreciation of all the Armed Forces personnel. The message also said that such contributions reflected true belonging and awareness of the circumstances the country is passing through.

Abu Sharif

(Continued from page 1)

negotiating table.

It quoted him as saying the PLO would agree that a non-PLO Palestinian delegation negotiate a settlement with Israel, that the Palestinians would accept a state less than the complete West Bank and Gaza Strip, that the Palestinian state need not be headed by Mr. Arafat, and that the sought-for homeland would be demilitarised for a transitional period.

Wafa, the PLO news agency, said from Tunis that Mr. Au Sharif, if he had said these things, was only representing himself and not reflecting the official line.

Mr. Abu Sharif told Jordan Radio Wednesday that his statement was distorted. "There's absolutely no truth to this news" that the PLO was willing to offer concessions.

Mr. Abu Sharif, 44, started his career in the liberation move-

ment when he was studying for a bachelor's degree in political science at the American University of Beirut in the early 1960s. He later also obtained a master's degree in chemistry from the university.

He was an active member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) until he broke ranks with its leader, George Habash, in 1987.

As official spokesman for the PFLP in 1972, Mr. Abu Sharif escaped assassination when a letter bomb exploded in his hands as he opened an envelope addressed to him at the PFLP headquarters in Beirut. He lost his left eye, and three fingers. His face remains grossly disfigured.

He is a native of the West Bank village of Kafar Aqab. He is married and has two children, Karma, 15, and Omar 12.

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

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Economic Forum

Policies that needlessly distort investment

ON the northern tip of the east coast of the Dead Sea stands the Dead Sea Hotel which has not been inaugurated but nevertheless has been receiving few holiday-makers since last fall, mainly from Jordan but also from Germany. The Gulf crisis badly disrupted the activities of the hotel as well as its plans. Hopefully, the end of the war will herald a new and prosperous era for this hotel and other touristic activities in Jordan and the Middle East area at large.

The focus of this article is neither the hotel per se nor tourism. It just seemed too odd to me to find that the establishment of this facility, the first and only hotel in such an important touristic location, was delayed until 1990, almost a decade after the greatest economic boom in the area had faded away.

There is however a good, albeit sad, explanation for this oddity. The proprietors of this privately-owned hotel applied for its establishment as early as 1978, that is in the heat of the economic boom. The shores of the Dead Sea are state-owned and the land on which the building was to be erected had to be leased by the government. That process took eight years to accomplish as the necessary lease was granted only in 1986.

This was spectacular example of how the governmental

policies, procedures and/or shortsightedness could unnecessarily distort and sometimes ravage the investment climate. To a private entrepreneur, the idea of building the first hotel on the Dead Sea shore could be a very bright investment opportunity in the midst of a business boom. To withhold the lease for six or more years turns the whole thing upside down because the economic wheel runs a full cycle over such a period to the extent that what was one feasible might turn out to be unfeasible. Under these or similar circumstances, even the smartest entrepreneurs and investors cannot work. Thanks to absurd economic policies and bureaucratic practices, entrepreneurs end up embroiled in aborted investments and projects. Most probably they also end up defaulting on their loans to banks and, altogether, in a financial mess.

At this particular time juncture, Jordan badly needs a truly healthy investment climate to enable it cope with the existent and coming economic challenges and to render its economy a competent and competitive one in the markets and avenues of the post-war era. It will be so tragic if the government outdated practices impede the adjustment warranted by the new era especially with respect to improving and enhancing the prevailing

investment climate. A genuine shift in the mentality should take place in a way that must guarantee that this climate be liberalised as much as possible. The complexities and some of the once undisputed norms of the past have to be abandoned; government policies should facilitate investment not impede it under outdated pretext of awkwardly defined public interest.

And this shift may well need real guts, particularly in the area of public finance where the reigning mentality seems to be preoccupied mainly with raising more revenues through imposing punitive taxes decreed in provisional laws, rather than with stimulating investment and enhancing its climate. Let us hope that the present managers of our economic and fiscal policies have the courage necessary to overcome their historical bias and to righten the course of the current policies.

J. Schumpeter's model of economic development is based on the notion that innovation is the most important force that propels growth. Innovation is what entrepreneurs do. If government policies and procedures frustrate the entrepreneurial spirit the way our economic policy did in the case of the Dead Sea Hotel project and if this state of affairs continues, there will not be much to hope for in the economic area in the long years to come.

Slide must stop

JORDAN'S DECISION in principle to attend the 95th session of the Arab League Council offers a window of opportunity to begin the process of healing Arab wounds in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis. All indications point to Amman's acceptance of the invitation to go to Cairo for the Arab meeting at the foreign ministers' level.

True, Jordan has ample reservations about the speed and arbitrary way the Arab League's headquarters was transferred from Tunis to Cairo a few months ago. Six other Arab states also voiced concern about the manner of transferring the Arab organisation to Cairo and therefore boycotted the league's meeting in Cairo last September for that reason. Yet the fact remains that a resolution in principle was adopted in March of 1990 to transfer the Arab League to Cairo after the end of the suspension of Egypt as a league member. This is no time to haggle about form and procedural issues since the Arab World is beleaguered by a host of greater and potentially more dangerous conflicts and issues. Once the foreign ministers of the feuding Arab states get together and start talking to one another there will be endless opportunities to put the Arab World on the right track once again. Such an opportunity must not be missed. In the same vein, sincere efforts must be exerted to have Baghdad represented in such an Arab forum especially because it would be the first of its kind occurring in the wake of the Gulf war. Iraq was and still is an important part of the Arab Order and a founding member of the Arab League. No doubt, the Arab meeting's agenda is uppermost on the minds of the Arab countries participating in the Cairo session. Presumably the issues associated with the Palestinian case and the aftermath of the Gulf war would be accorded the highest priority. In this context, the Arab governments are invited to pay closer attention to the alarming situation inside Kuwait where persistent and confirmed reports speak of acts of torture, arbitrary arrests and murder being committed against non-Kuwaiti nationals, especially Jordanian and Palestinian residents of that country.

The London-based human rights organisation, Amnesty International, has called for an investigation of the reports of gross and systematic human rights violations in Kuwait and a communiqué issued by it maintains that "the growing number of reports point to a pattern of abuses that must be open to urgent and independent investigation." The Arab League should be at the forefront of such an investigation and the Cairo Arab meeting on March 30 provides the kind of opportunity to begin or follow up on just that. It would be utterly irresponsible of the Arab countries to have international organisations whether non-governmental or governmental to conduct such an investigation while they sit idly by. Human rights violations in any part of the Arab World is a stigma and a travesty that would afflict all the Arab peoples wherever they are. Liberated Kuwait is naturally under the limelight of international and regional scrutiny and it behooves the government there to facilitate an Arab probe into its human rights record before it becomes the subject of international fora's microscopic investigations for years to come. The list of Arab countries under United Nations investigations for allegedly perpetrating gross and systematic human rights violations is already long and it would be a sad moment if one more Arab state is added to the dishonourable list.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE END of the Gulf war gave way to the advent of a new and real war, tantamount to a holy struggle on the part of the Arab and Islamic people against the United States and colonial powers, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Tuesday. With their present actions, the United States, Britain and the Zionist enemies are sowing in our hearts a deep-rooted hatred, and paving the ground for a real confrontation which is still to begin, the paper noted. By murdering the Iraqi people, President Bush did not achieve victory and this criminal can never get rid of the complex created by his crime, the paper continued. Bush had come with his arsenal of weapons to kill women and children, but with the disguise of a savior because he had claimed that his forces were sent to the desert to protect Saudi Arabia, but later changed the slogan to liberating Kuwait. After his barbaric aggression on the Iraqi people, Bush is still holding on to parts of Iraqi territory and continues to starve the Iraqi people hoping to rid the American public of the Vietnam complex and the defeat of the American forces there, the paper pointed out. What the United States had committed since August last year is a series of crimes driven by the belief that it can kill and destroy and do whatever it wants in other nations lands with impunity, the paper added. But, it said, the United States and its president can by no means escape the wrath of the Arabs and Muslims who will sooner or later wage a real and a long holy war against the aggressors.

Now that the Gulf states have decided to punish Jordan for its nationalist stand during the Gulf crisis by boycotting Jordanian agricultural products, the concerned authorities should not harbour false hopes that these markets in the Gulf could ever return, says a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab daily. The search for new markets for the surplus products is not a novelty for Jordan which used to sell agricultural products to European nations as well as the Arab states even when ties were good with the Arabs, says Ahmad Dhiban. In fact Jordan started looking for new markets for its products in the early 1980s because the rich Gulf states had started producing their own needs of crops, albeit at an extravagant cost, and because Jordanian products have started to confront heavy competition due to the cheaper products from Turkey and Greece, says the writer. But on the whole, he notes, the concerned authorities in Jordan did not give much seriousness to the search for European markets in the past, and consequently only limited amounts of agricultural products succeeded in reaching European markets in the past years.

By Michael Novick

The following article is reprinted from the New York-based, The Guardian, an independent radical newsweekly.

LOS ANGELES — With the Gulf war ending, it is unclear whether the recent surge of attacks on Arab-Americans will recede, according to Arab-American groups.

The problem is national in scope, and Arab-American activists hold the government partially responsible. They say FBI harassment of Arab-Americans and inadequate responses to attacks have created the environment for hate crimes to flourish. Since Operation Desert Storm began Jan. 17, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has received more than 50 reports, of acts of violence, harassment and intimidation against Arab-Americans. These follow on the heels of 47 incidents between the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Jan. 17. The rate increased from fewer than one per month in early 1990 to 58 in the month of January this year.

More hairy eyeballing

The committee also criticised continuing FBI questioning of Arab-Americans. Ghassan Khalek, an employee of the Federal Communications Com-

mission, described the negative effects of having FBI agents arrive at his office and flash their badges to question him, making him appear a suspect. "There are people who don't want to hang out with you because they know the FBI is looking for you." But not everyone is giving Khalek the hairy eyeball. Khalek told a press conference that at least one co-worker has hung a sign on his office door saying, "Arab people are our friends, not our enemies."

Hate crimes in the wake of the war have not been restricted to Arab-Americans; the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith reported a record number of attacks against Jews last year, with a 71 per cent increase in California alone. Betsy Rosenthal of the league said 1991 looks to be even worse.

Other government agencies besides the FBI have harassed Arab-Americans. In Los Angeles, the Department of Motor Vehicles attempted to revoke personalised licence plates reading "4 JIHAD" purchased a year ago by Dr. Kareem Jaffer for a 12-year-old BMW he got for his son. "Jihad," meaning "holy war" in Arabic, is the teen-ager's name.

A spokesman for the agency said a motorist complained that

the plates are advertising that the Jaffers "are for a holy war against U.S. forces in the Gulf; they would be very offensive obviously to many people." The department backed down from its attempt to retrieve the plates after press reports disclosed that Jihad was the youth's name.

In Tulsa, Okla., an Iraqi-American family was burned out of their home on Feb. 21. According to Abdul Almusanni, the message "You are dead" was spray-painted on his house. Police are investigating the arson attack as a hate crime.

Tulsa is the home of several white supremacist groups, including the Oklahoma Whitemen's Association, and was the site of one of Tom Metzger's racist telephone hate lines over which the White Aryan Resistance leader slandered Arabs and Jews.

In San Francisco, Moustafa Awadalla, a Kuwaiti immigrant, was brutally beaten while delivering a pizza in the Haight Ashbury district, which has also been the scene of organising by Metzger's group and neo-Nazi skinheads associated with it. Awadalla, who required six hours of brain surgery, believes he was attacked "just for being an Arab."

At the University of Texas in Austin, someone tacked up posters featuring a racist caricature of

an Arab man captioned, "Wanted: Dead or Alive — Any Arab."

In Boston, Ahmad Tahba, a Palestinian, received death threats and was forced to move from his home. His roommate was told, "Kick the Arab out." Across the river in Cambridge, Mass., several Kuwaiti students were harassed in February, resulting in the suspension of those responsible.

In Gaithersburg, Md., an Iranian-American family was beaten by a road crew. The attackers fractured the father's skull in the beating, and he is still partially paralysed. One of them was quoted as saying, "I want to kill these foreigners to teach them a lesson about complaining in our country."

In Bloomington, N.J., police are investigating whether the vandalism of a Jordanian-American family's home during the second week of February was a "bias incident." Omar Samman, a U.S. resident for two decades, reported a threatening phone call received by his family as the ground war loomed. "A man said that if anything happened to our troops in the Gulf, our family would pay for it," Samman told reporters.

Intruders slashed several pieces

of furniture and broke a large mirror, leaving a yellow ribbon in the living room. Unlike most people in the neighbourhood, the Sammans did not display ribbon. Nevertheless, neighbours and families of the children's classmates were supportive, calling with offers of help.

Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, several Lebanese seeking political asylum have been placed in detention and face prosecution for using false documents. Attorneys working on the cases say the number of Arabs seeking asylum is unprecedented and has climbed in recent months to nearly 50 per cent of the caseload, which had previously been predominantly Central Americans.

Asylum seekers frequently use false papers since they are fleeing to avoid persecution and fear revealing their identities to their countries' authorities. Both before and after the charges were filed against the two Lebanese, non-Arabs have been allowed to enter under similar circumstances, immigration lawyers with the Political Asylum Project say. They feel U.S. Attorney Wayne Budd and the FBI field office are selectively targeting Arabs.

The Arab-American community and legal-rights activists met with newly elected Massachusetts Attorney General Scott Har-

shbarger to seek protection for Arab-Americans from harassment by federal authorities in the state. Harshbarger agreed to have the head of his civil rights division look into the possibility of state action.

Activists are also fighting back in California. Students sitting in at the University of California in Los Angeles demanded the university not cooperate with FBI investigations of Arab-American anti-war activists. The administration agreed not to turn over school files or records.

In other developments: ● In San Diego, where the Islamic Centre was the target of a crude pipe bomb discovered before it exploded, an interfaith group including Muslim groups and the National Conference of Christians and Jews held a press conference to call for mutual support and understanding.

● In San Francisco, where there have been 35 incidents directed against Arabs and Arab-owned business since Jan. 16, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee is conducting a forum with African-Americans and Arab-Americans.

● The Valley Interfaith Council in Los Angeles is planning a programme to focus on hate crimes in the wake of the war in the Gulf.

By Bernd Debusmann

Reuters

WASHINGTON — After urging the people of Iraq to oust their President Saddam Hussein, Washington is now being accused of allowing him to crush their uprising for the sake of stability in the Gulf region.

As the rebellion spreads, Iraqi opposition leaders and Middle East analysts say it is becoming clear the United States would prefer continued authoritarian rule in post-war Iraq, although without Saddam, to genuine change in the political order.

"The Americans are working on the assumption that changes in the regime must come from within, from people already in power," Lothi Kubba, head of the London-based Democratic Reform Movement, said in an interview with Reuters.

"They don't want to pursue the possibility of government collapsing in the hands of revolutionary groups and hence encouraging the potential of either disintegration or inviting neighbouring parties to fill the power vacuum."

Ahmed Chalabi, an international banker active in the anti-Saddam opposition abroad, has put it more bluntly: "The United States, covered by the fig leaf of non-interference in Iraqi affairs,

By William Scally
Reuters

WASHINGTON — President George Bush and Congress are heading for a repeat of last year's bitter battle over civil rights that ended with recriminations and a presidential veto.

Democrats and Bush's Republican allies in Congress have introduced competing bills designed to help minorities and women fight job discrimination.

And the same buzzword — "quotas" — that was heard throughout last year's debate is again in the air. Republicans say the Democrats' bill would force employers to set minority quotas in their hiring to avoid costly discrimination suits. Democrats say the Republican alternative is a backward step.

A civil rights bill is a top priority for congressional Democrats. Last year they forged a bipartisan coalition that passed similar legislation and sent it to the White House.

Bush vetoed it. Seeking the two-thirds majority required to override this veto, the bill's supporters in the Senate fell just one vote short.

Democrats believe they have a good chance of enacting the bill

U.S. seen to favour authoritarian rule in post-war Iraq

is waiting for Saddam to butcher the insurgents in the hope that he can be overthrown later by a suitable officer."

According to Chalabi, this attitude is rooted in U.S. policies on the Middle East which have long been based on "supporting dictatorships to maintain stability."

Over the past week, President George Bush has warned Iraq against the use of poison gas or combat helicopters to crush insurgencies by Shi'ite militants in southern Iraq and Kurdish rebels in the north.

But there has been no such warning on the use of Iraqi army tanks and other heavy weapons to cut down lightly armed anti-regime rebels.

"It is clear the (Bush) administration wants the government to regain power over the whole of the country. They want the Sunni (Muslim) ascendancy main-

tained. They don't want the Shi'ites to have a share in power," said Rashid Khalidi, of the University of Chicago's Middle East Studies Centre.

Harvard University's Laurie Myroie, author of a new book on Iraq, concurred. "The preferred outcome is another, though tamer, military regime in Baghdad," she said.

Democracy, Iraqi opposition leaders and analysts say, is not on Washington's agenda for post-war Iraq.

Long before the first bombs began falling, Bush made clear that bringing democracy to Iraq was not an American objective. "This is not about democracy; it is about legitimacy," he said of the Gulf war.

It is also about U.S. self-interest and relationships with U.S. allies in the Middle East after a military triumph that confirmed

Washington's role as the world's leading superpower.

"Chaos in Iraq and a free-for-all civil war on the pattern of Lebanon would not serve our purposes, nor those of our allies," said a U.S. official. "And that is precisely what would happen if the old order collapsed."

The anti-government revolt in Iraq erupted early in March in the south of the country and is being led by Shi'ite Muslims, who form the majority in Iraq.

A post-Saddam government dominated by militant Shi'ites would be a nightmare not only for the United States — which backed Saddam for years to balance the rising weight of Shi'ite Iran — but also for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

They all have sizable Shi'ite minorities who have long demanded more say and would be encouraged by a new Shi'ite power in the region.

Democracy in Iraq would be equally unpalatable for Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Washington. "Defence is being paid to the undemocratic sensibilities of the Saudi monarchy," Myroie said, "and one has the impression the U.S. is leaving its Arab coalition partners to sort it out with the Iraqis."

practice by showing "business necessity."

The Republican bill contains a broad definition of business necessity on civil rights, which is campaigning for the Democratic bill, says this definition could permit blatantly discriminatory practices.

But senator Orrin Hatch, of Utah, the senior Republican on the Judiciary Committee, claimed that the stricter standard set in the Democratic bill would probably push employers' average legal defence costs from the present \$80,000 to \$500,000.

"The employer's only way to avoid being costed out of business by attorneys is to hire by numbers ... then, of course, that's hiring by quotas," he said.

Senate Republican leader Robert Dole accused the Democrats of playing politics and said Bush wanted to sign a civil rights bill this year but would veto the Democratic version.

But Richard Seymour, head of the Employment Discrimination Project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, accused the administration of working last year to ensure that no civil rights bill would be enacted.

LETTERS

Voices of truth

To the Editor:

ON behalf of Austin Veterans Peace in the Middle East I bring greetings to the people of Jordan and Palestine from Texas, USA. We are former professional killers and international terrorists who once served in the Armed Forces of the United States. At various stages of our careers we saw the error of our ways and have since devoted ourselves to the cause of peace and justice. I personally gave up a career as a navy pilot so as not to ever participate in any madness such as what we have just seen. This was the wisest action of my life.

Our group organised at the beginning of the recent crisis to oppose U.S. military involvement in the region. Though we did our best, we regret that the forces of hate and destruction were more powerful than the voices of truth and light in our country.

Einstein pointed out that the losers in a conflict learn that war doesn't pay. The problem lies in teaching this to the winners. Our task is great, but we pledge our lives to continue the struggle for understanding, justice, peace, and disarmament.

I was privileged to visit Jordan and Palestine with a recent delegation of various American community leaders who came to convey our sorrow at the turn of events, to bring medical supplies, and to try to understand the situation more fully. I thank the personalities who found the patience to meet with us during this troubled time. The people of the Arab World and America have gone through many difficult things together. Despite all of this, let us work to come out of this crisis as friends.

May the barbed wire be removed from our hearts and from the land!

May all rifles be broken!

May we live to tell our grandchildren what wars once were!

For Peace

William G. Kelsey
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Elgin, TX. 78621 USA

Thrift, thrift

To the Editor:

THE future of Jordan's economy depends solely on how the Jordanian government manages the aid and grants that Jordan has received and continues to receive. If government-to-government aid is spent on non-essential needs compared with our present economic situation, then this money will be wasted. The concerned government officials must channel a certain percentage of aid per year to invest and re-invest in industrial, agricultural, and touristic projects that would earn Jordan hard currency, employment, further economic and political security. The government must make use of this money to invest along with the private sector in projects that are best suited for Jordan. Ministry of Industry and Trade has already a list of feasible projects that it used to recommend to the private sector. If we Jordanians are serious about getting our country economically fit, then let us spend our money where it would do us good most: on positive, productive projects.

Wajih Murad
Amman.

'Pay up or else,' U.S. may tell allies

WASHINGTON (AP) — An angry U.S. Congress is about to decide how to pressure its allies to deliver on their pledges to help the United States pay for the Gulf war.

With tens of billions of dollars at stake, the only question appears to be in what form Congress will try to collect the money.

The options range from a vague warning of "pay up, or else" to an arms-sale ban against countries that have promised more than they have delivered. Congress should settle this week on language in war-financing legislation lawmakers expect to send to President George Bush.

The effort to get slow-moving allies to pay up has not set well with everyone in Congress. "What are we going to do" about countries behind in their promised payments, asked the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee chairman, Representative Jamie Whitten. "Are we going to call Congress in session here and issue an edict and send troops over there?"

"Is this the way you treat our allies and people who are helping you?" asked Rep. Neal Smith. But with the allies still owing \$36.6 billion from promised assistance totaling \$54.5 billion, Mr. Whitten and Mr. Smith seem to be in a minority. The alternative, lawmakers realise, is for more of the war's costs to be borne by U.S. taxpayers.

"Our allies have a moral obligation to pay their share of the cost of this war," said Rep.

Jim Chapman, who sponsored the provision approved by the House of Representatives on March 7. "The American people have already paid with their lives, their troops, their will and their commitment," Mr. Chapman said.

Last Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee without discussion endorsed a prohibition on arms sales to countries that have not fully lived up to their pledges.

"If the promisor nation has money to buy arms from us, it can first use that money to fulfill its pledge to help defray some of our costs," said the report accompanying the Senate bill.

With little dissent, the House of Representatives voted March 7 for milder language that vaguely warned, "if these commitments are not met, the Congress may consider appropriate action."

The measure gave contributing countries until April 15 to pay up — the same deadline Americans face for their income taxes.

Although the house provision does not state what action Congress might take, Mr. Pursell talked earlier in the month about requiring trade negotiators to take "appropriate action." That represented a clear effort to get the attention of trading giant Japan.

The two chambers of Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate, plan to work out a compromise provision this week. From the beginning, however, the house and Senate seemed to have separate groups of allies in mind in preparing their threats.

as saying.

In the south, refugees told reporters Monday that rebels still held parts of the ravaged port city of Basra.

Iraqi Shiites led the insurgency in the south. Refugees reaching the U.S.-occupied strip in the south said thousands of bodies littered the streets of Basra, Iraq's second largest city. Some put the number of dead as high as 5,000.

Tehran Radio said 12,000 to 16,000 people were reported killed on the highway between Najaf and Karbala, in the south, it gave no source for the numbers.

Iraq's government newspapers said the army was driving rebels from southern cities, but said the "mobs of saboteurs" and foreigners left behind widespread devastation.

A group of Iraqi soldiers who said they had fought alongside the Shiites told Reuters correspondent Donald Forbes at a U.S. front-line post that resistance had died down and the Republican Guards were conducting house-to-house searches.

Some 30,000 Iraqis have fled into Iran in the past few weeks from the south, a senior United Nations official said Tuesday.

Some of an estimated 7,000 recent arrivals at a camp in Khorramshahr, in Iran's Khuzestan province, had apparently suffered burns from napalm bombs, Horishi Nakajima, director-general of the World Health Organisation (WHO) said.

Mr. Nakajima was speaking at a news conference shortly after his return from a five-day tour of Iranian refugee camps.

"The situation is compounded by the fact that many towns in southern Iran, including Khorramshahr, were completely devastated during the (eight-year) Iran-Iraq war and lack basic facilities to treat the wounded or burned," Mr. Nakajima said.

Planes

(Continued from page 1)

Five hundred Iraqis travelled to Arar, 1,050 kilometres northwest of Dharan, in Saudi Arabia buses and transferred to a dozen Jordanian buses for the trip to Baghdad.

That brought the number returned to Iraq to about 2,400. An estimated 60,000 Iraqis are in allied hands.

"We think that it should be more prisoners being returned per day, otherwise it will take months," said Pascal Daudin of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in Riyadh.

Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

Kirkuk, 240 kilometres north of Baghdad. It said troops guarding surrounding oil fields surrendered to the opposition.

Hoshyar Zebari, a front spokesman, said rebels had brought down two Iraqi helicopter gunships over Kirkuk early Tuesday morning.

Iran, meanwhile, is becoming more outspoken in its support for the rebellion.

Iran's IRNA news agency reported that Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati told a visiting Italian diplomat that international organisations should support the revolt.

To decide their own fate from any foreign interventions is the undeniable right of the Iraqi people," IRNA quoted Mr. Velayati.

Ramadan a subdued affair in wake of Gulf war

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — Kuwait observed Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, without the age-old celebrations and night-long revelry. Gloom reigned, and people kept the rituals to a bare minimum.

"We don't sense the glamour of Ramadan," lamented retired diplomat Mohammad Al Qadiri. "Most Kuwaitis are licking their wounds, mourning their dead, looking for missing persons."

The aftermath of the Gulf war has not only dampened the atmosphere, it has also meant widespread shortages.

"Mr. Qadiri's wife Sorayya, a painter and writer, complained that food shortages have 'robbed Ramadan this year of its traditional flavour'."

In Baghdad, where the future looked even bleaker, even fresh supplies of vegetables in markets for the first time in days failed to relieve the gloom. Many people complained they did not have money to buy and others bemoaned the lack of vendors who usually sell Ramadan sweets.

"There is no electricity and insufficient quantities of flour and sugar to make Ramadan's special sweets this year," said a Baghdad baker owner. "People will have to eat homemade sweets and eat much less than usual now."

"We feel that God and sanctions have together worked this year to compel us to tighten our belts," said a taxi driver in the Iraqi capital.

During Ramadan, which began Sunday, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. But at night they entertain family and friends with traditional dishes that include nuts, dried figs and dates, meat and vegetables.

In Kuwait, most of the country is without tap water and many people have been unable to do their ritual washings after each of five daily prayers.

According to Muslim belief, devils are chained during Ramadan, and God rewards tenfold those who fast, pray and exert themselves to win His favour.

The Kuwaiti government, freshly returned from seven months of exile in Saudi Arabia, brought in power generators to light homes and minarets of mosques. Loudspeakers were placed atop minarets to amplify prayers, and verses of the Koran.

Yugoslavia

(Continued from page 1)

with federal leaders and the presidents of all republics and provinces to take place on Thursday.

But Serbia paralysed the presidency by voting to remove the presidency representative of Kosovo province, leaving it one short of a quorum. Four of the eight members have quit or been removed since Friday.

The army statement indicated the army would be willing to clamp down on any renewed street unrest like the clashes between police and pro-democracy demonstrators in Belgrade on March 9.

Army tanks rumbled through the capital's streets on that day to reimpose order, but were withdrawn 24 hours later.

In three days of meetings last week, Serbia failed to win approval from the eight-man federal presidency for a national wide military state of emergency. Leaders of the democratically

"Here's a manifestation of religious hypocrisy... generators go to empty mosques when homes are without electricity," said one middle-aged merchant, who refused to be identified. "I simply can't listen to Koranic chanting when my mind is anguished and my future bleak."

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. It was during Ramadan 14 centuries ago that the Angel Gabriel revealed to Mohammad the verses of the Koran at a desolate cave near Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia.

During the month, physically able Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink, cigarettes and pleasures of the flesh every day from dawn until sunset.

The fast is far more trying when Ramadan falls in July or August, when desert heat aggravates thirst and saps strength. Muslims stop eating and drinking at dawn, when they hear the sound of a gun salvo that signals the commencement of the day's fast. They go to their shops and offices about mid-morning and close down at mid-day, when most of them go home and spend the rest of the day in bed.

Housewives, meanwhile, prepare about a dozen special Ramadan dishes. Shortly before sundown, families sit around long tables or squat on rugs in tents and wait impatiently for the breakfast gun salvo.

"We make up for the daylong fast, and we eat and drink from sunset till dawn," conceded travel agency manager Saad Mohareb. "Yes, we turn it from a month of fasting to a month of feasting."

Productivity drops sharply during the month, but no Muslim leader would dare tell his people not to fast.

As Ramadan began, Kuwait looked like a graveyard, silent and sombre. Dark and deserted streets were littered with wrecked vehicles. Piles of sandbags and blasted concrete blocked roads, where gun-toting soldiers stopped motorists, frisked trunks and checked identity cards.

A spate of rumours about clashes between expatriate Palestinian workers and Kuwaiti soldiers made Kuwaitis all the more restless.

elector governments of the republics of Slovenia and Croatia said Serbia was only interested in using the military to prop up its communist government.

The heart of the dispute among the republics is how power should be distributed between them and the federal government. Slovenia and Croatia want to loose confederation of states that have virtual sovereignty, but Serbia wants a strong federal government with tight control over the republics.

Serbia's opponents also have accused its headline president Slobodan Milosevic, of trying to provoke ethnic conflicts between Serbs and Croats, or among ethnic Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province.

According to the military's statement, the army would move in to halt such violence.

The army is dominated by a mostly ethnic Serb and pro-communist officer corps. But there have been signs of serious differences in the armed forces over what its role should be in the face of the breakup of the nation.

More precious than oil, water could cause Mideast's next war

By Alan Cowell

AMMAN — AS the Gulf war exploded over issues of oil and honour and expansionism, another, more modest event occurred here: the rains came, fickle but abundant, greening pale deserts and offering a reminder that, in many parts of the Middle East, water is far more rare and precious than oil and could, one day, breed conflict of its own.

"We need not only military security, but economic security," Osama Al Baz, a senior adviser to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, said in Cairo the other day during a discussion of the post-war era. "And that also means questions of the environment, and the security of water supplies. Because if water becomes scarce, it could become a source of serious conflict throughout the region."

Like the drained audience after some epic drama, many in the Middle East are now blinking into the light, discovering that old realities of war and peace have simply been waiting to slip back onto their shoulders, easy as overcoats left at the cloakroom.

Now, as for many years, warnings abound that competition for water could breed conflict unless a new and unlikely spirit of tolerance comes to a region more familiar with calculations of absolute gain and loss. "Relative to the number of people in Jordan, Israel and the occupied territories," said Elias Salameh, a specialist at Jordan University, "there is not enough water. It's a zero-sum issue. Any gain for Arabs is a loss for Israel, and vice versa."

Even the briefest glimpse at the region's geography and demography shows why the issue is so fickle: populations are growing far more rapidly than aquifers can be replenished; rivers cross borders between states that put self-interest before sharing; rainfall, in many places, is scarce and capricious.

The deserts of the Arabian peninsula, for instance, are so vast and harsh that oil-rich nations like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia now depend on expensive desalting plants on the Gulf. As the Gulf war raged, one of the region's principal economic worries was that oil slicks in the Gulf would damage Saudi desalting plants, robbing the kingdom of much of its fresh water. That has not happened, but Iraqi soldiers destroyed or disabled most of Kuwait's desalting capability. Significantly, some of the first ships to dock at Kuwait carried not the emirate's erstwhile imports of Gucci shoes and Louis Vuitton luggage, but water.

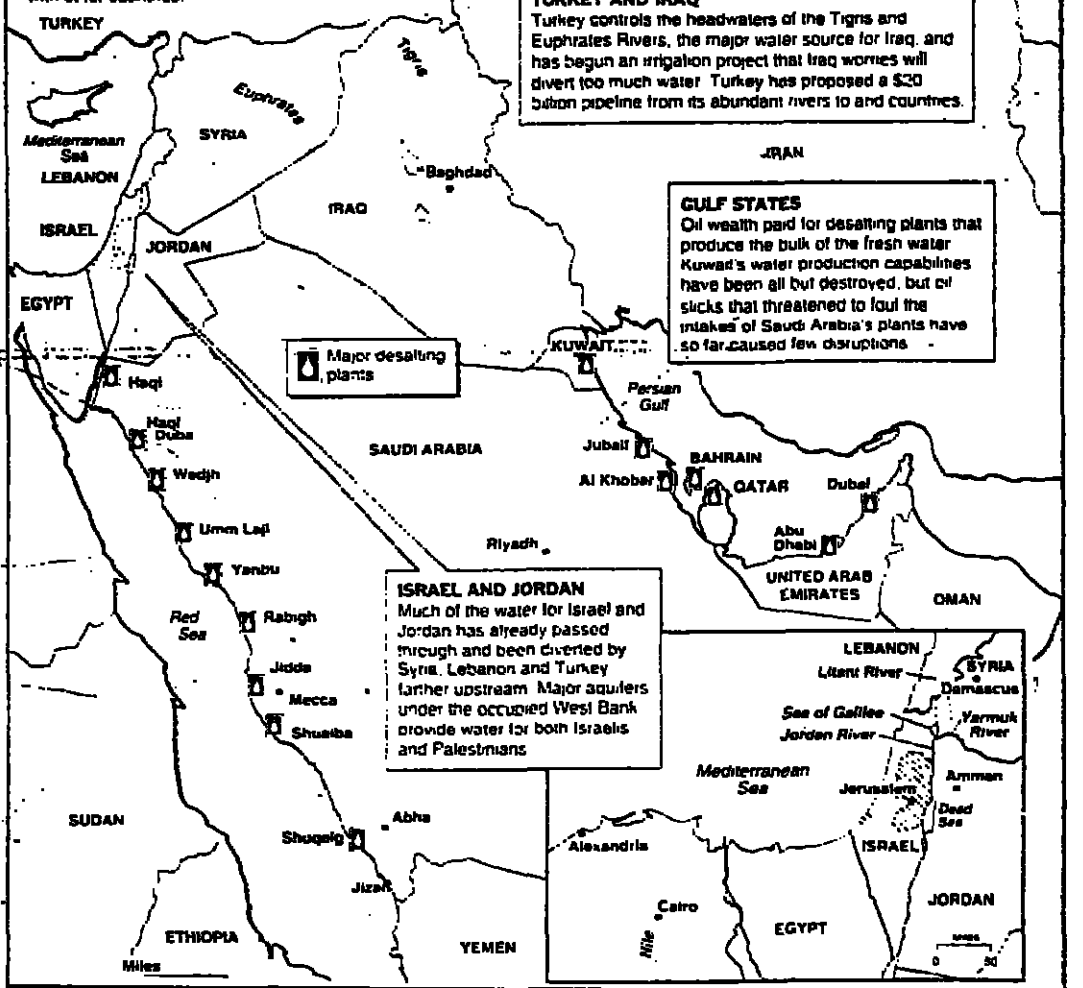
Competition for the water is all the sharper because of the technological and cost limitations that sharply restrict the options of the region's non-oil economies. "Desalination plants are only for the rich oil-producers," said one Israeli water expert. "Without oil money to pay for them, they are simply too expensive for the consumer."

The economic aspects extend elsewhere. "The deeper you drill for water," said Dr. Salameh, "the more expensive the process becomes. Ultimately, the water becomes too expensive" even for the drip-fed irrigation pioneered by Israel and imitated by other arid countries in the region, from Cyprus to Jordan.

Iraq itself is one of the most

Slaking a region's thirst

Turkey and Egypt are the only Middle East countries with adequate supplies of water within their borders. Most other nations must depend on sources that are shared with other countries.



fertile of Arab countries — part of the ancient Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates. But of its 170,000 square miles, Western experts say, one-third is cultivable, and only one-third of that is irrigated. In one-third of the irrigated area, moreover, excessive use of fertilizers has salted the land with chemicals.

Farther north, on the Mediterranean coast, shoreline aquifers from Libya to the Gaza Strip are turning brackish because salt water from the sea is drawn in to replace the fresh water pumped out by humans.

And at the core of the Middle East's problems is populations in Syria and Jordan are growing at rates close to 3 per cent a year, while Israel bulges with the huge influx of Soviet immigrants.

Whatever their faith, however, all are reliant on the same complex of limited water supplies from the Jordan, Yarmuk and Litani rivers and aquifers that lie below the water-shed between the occupied West Bank and Israel — waters that are not easily shared.

"Water is our life," Israel's right-wing Likud party declared as long ago as 1988, saying that since the occupied West Bank provided 40 per cent of Israel's fresh water resources — a figure sometimes disputed — it made no sense to place it in the hands of potential enemies. That hardly seems an omen of peace or territorial concession.

But it is a matter of security. Locations and sizes of aquifers, the amount of water taken and for what purposes, are often treated as state secrets. Even the statistics that are available are often mistrusted.

In the entire region, only Egypt and Turkey have plentiful water. Yet Egypt, according to Western

experts, fritters away the Nile through irrigation that uses too much water to produce too few crops. Turkey has alarmed its southern neighbours by damming the Euphrates and limiting its flow.

As the Gulf crisis unfolded, rumours spread in Cairo that Iraq had stationed missiles in the Sudan, aimed at the Aswan High Dam — the great barrier in Upper Egypt that controls the Nile flow and thus dictates the whole rhythm of life along its banks. Cairo warned that any interference with the dam would be taken as an act of war.

And although Syria and Turkey were in the same allied camp during the Gulf crisis, Damascus maintained support for rebellious Kurdish guerrillas in eastern Turkey. One reason: Turkey controls the headwaters of the Euphrates that flows on through Syria and Iraq — a crucial water source in Turkey. By supporting the Kurds, Damascus was telling Ankara to expect revenge for any restriction of the river's flow.

Yet it is in the region straddling the Jordan valley — the flashpoint of the Arab-Israeli dispute — that water shortages are most acute and most laden with the emotive overtones of the conflict. Both Jordan and Israel are tapping underground aquifers for more water than can be replenished, Dr. Salameh said at the university here. Non-renewable water resources — known to specialists as fossil water — are rapidly being depleted.

Too Many People
"The population is already too big for the water resources," Dr. Salameh said. By 1995, he said the situation will be critical. Experts in both Israel and Jordan acknowledge that even if

water were shared between them, there would not be enough. Jordan accuses Israel of diverting disproportionate amounts of fresh water from the Sea of Galilee into Israel's National Water Carrier — an aqueduct system that feeds Tel Aviv. A result, Jordanians assert, is that the Jordan River south of the lake is saline and unusable for irrigation. Between them, Israel and Jordan use so much of the river's water that the level of the Dead Sea is reportedly dropping. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, moreover, say they are subject to Israeli limitations on the depth of their wells while Israel freely acknowledges that it draws fresh water from the same aquifers.

"Talk has thus turned to grand and often unpredictable ideas. Turkey has offered what it calls a "peace pipeline," a \$20 billion project to pump water from its Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers to more arid lands; without much hope, specialists in Israel and Jordan suggest that surplus Nile water be diverted to needier lands. This fall, under the auspices of the World Bank and United Nations Development Project, the President of Turkey and the Global Water Summit Initiative, a non-profit research group, will sponsor a regional conference in hopes of encouraging cooperation.

Beyond that, the Middle East seems caught in one of its familiar conundrums: logic demands that people cooperate to solve potential crisis; but such is the competition, fear and mistrust between them that continued hostility seems more probable. "I do not think that the water problem in the whole area can be solved without a proper peace agreement," said Dr. Salameh. "But that is obviously very difficult." — The New York Times.

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Cash for those who stayed

Kuwaiti banks reopen Sunday

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's banks will reopen Sunday, giving government cash grants of 500 dinars (\$1,750) for all Kuwaitis who stayed through Iraq's seven-month occupation of the emirate.

Central bank governor Sheikh Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah said Tuesday a new exchange rate would also be fixed Sunday, near the pre-invasion level of about \$3.5 to the dinar.

The Iraqis who invaded Kuwait last Aug. 2 took away 1.3 million ounces of gold nearly \$1 billion and 350 million dinars (\$1,225 billion) in cash from the bank's vaults, but left the white marble interior otherwise intact.

Sheikh Salem told a news conference the Iraqis had been given the vault's combination by bank staff, whom he refused to identify, bypassing elaborate security precautions designed to prevent forcible entry which he said would have caused them "a lot of problems."

The governor said he doubted Iraq was serious about offers to return the gold.

Commercial banks' operations would be limited for up to three months to simple cash withdrawals and deposits, and exchanging new dinar banknotes for pre-invasion currency on a one-for-one basis.

He said 700 million dinars (\$2.4 billion) in new bills — almost identical in design but with different colours from the old notes — had been printed in London and flown out to Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) said Kuwait had set a six-month deadline for the central bank to exchange old banknotes for the new dinars.

"Sept. 30, 1991, is set as the final date for the central bank's commitment to exchange banknotes," KUNA quoted a cabinet decree as saying.

Sheikh Salem said non-Kuwaitis would not get the 500-dinar cash handouts. They in-

clude an estimated 170,000 Palestinians still in the emirate, many of whom the Kuwaitis accuse of collaborating with the Iraqis.

There would be restrictions on cash outflows for three months, but Kuwaiti commercial banks which had set up in London had already begun meeting foreign obligations under the central bank's supervision, he said.

The dinar's external exchange rate would continue to be based on a basket of currencies of Kuwait's major trading partners, he added.

Sheikh Salem said studies under way to establish the government's priorities for reconstruction would take at least six weeks to complete. It was therefore premature to speculate on the cost of rebuilding or the length of time needed.

It would also be impossible to estimate the extent of any recourse to foreign capital markets to finance reconstruction until the studies were complete.

But he confirmed earlier ministerial statements that there were no plans to liquidate foreign assets worth tens of billions of dollars to raise cash.

He described the aftermath of the invasion as "an economic disaster" with extensive damage to every aspect of the infrastructure as well as massive environmental harm resulting from hundreds of burning oil wells.

Eight months' oil revenue had been lost and it would be "quite some time" before oil production could be restored.

Sheikh Salem said mergers between Kuwait's seven commercial banks had been under discussion for two years before the invasion and were now even more important to improve the quality of the banking system.

"I hope very soon some mergers will be taking place among some of the banking units in Kuwait," he added.

Soviet president examines new way out of chaos in economy

MOSCOW (R) — President Mikhail Gorbachev is studying new ways of introducing a market economy in the Soviet Union, including restructuring defence industries for civilian needs, the Communist Party daily Pravda said Tuesday.

The paper's front-page report on a Kremlin meeting of leading economists also highlighted doubts over the country's economic direction and said few concrete proposals emerged to solve the economic crisis.

In its effort, the paper quoted the official TASS news agency as saying a new government economic programme would be formulated next month.

Pravda said Gorbachev opened the weekend meeting with a gloomy picture of economic prospects and a commitment to implement key market-oriented policies — an apparent response to Western concern that perestroika reforms were being reversed.

"The current leadership, firmly sticking to its chosen course for implementing cardinal reforms, moving towards a market, is in favour of their decisive continuation," he said.

"The most alarming thing, in my view, is the continued collapse of economic links," he added, referring to attempts by republics and regions to assert their autonomy by refusing to obey central orders or supply other areas.

The Soviet leader also produced figures showing industrial output in the first two months of this year fell by 4.5 per cent and

state purchases of meat dropped 13 per cent.

"The slump in production carries with it a great danger for the country, for satisfying the most basic needs of the people... what corrections should be made to our practical actions?" he said.

He suggested that economic models of countries in Eastern Europe, the West and Japan should be considered. But there were few new ideas at the meeting and no final conclusions.

Some economists called for more discipline, unity and state control, and warned about the dangers of "strike blackmail" — a reference to a strike by coal miners that threatens to cripple Soviet industry.

Others said there should be accelerated agricultural and land reform and impending retail price increases should be followed by a lifting of state controls on prices.

Gorbachev, emphasising the importance of restructuring defence industries to meet civilian needs, said: "distortion in favour of military production in the economy has been our misfortune. But the military sector offers a colossal opportunity. For there are huge possibilities here."

"Processing, storage and transport of farm produce is an area in particular need of help from the military-industrial complex," he added.

Gorbachev said progress had been made in cutting public spending, especially the military budget, but revenues were suffering because of "illegal, separatist actions."

Taxi drivers, students come among Taiwan's top stock earners

TAIPEI (R) — A check of the names of Taiwan's top 1989 stock earners has disclosed taxi drivers, students and unemployed workers — many of whom supposedly traded stocks worth more than 100 million Taiwan dollars (\$3.7 million).

A finance ministry official said a ministry investigation into 1989's most active stock accounts

WORLD STOCK MARKETS					
TOKYO — Shares closed moderately lower as the market digested Monday's 300-point gain. Brokers said a lack of strong factors and the absence of many investors ahead of the fiscal year-end on March 31 kept trade thin. But underlying confidence kept sellers, and the decline, in check. The 225-share Nikkei index closed down 140.25 points, or 0.52 per cent, at 27,006.66.					
SYDNEY — Shares ended a seven-day winning streak, closing fractionally weaker as profit-takers crept into the afternoon session. The All Ordinaries Index eased 0.3 points to 1,456.5.					
HONG KONG — Shares closed higher after a flurry of late afternoon demand for property blue chips. The Hang Seng Index ended up 27.05 points at 3,751.40.					
PARIS — Share prices came off sharply to close at their lowest March level mainly because of a comment by Bundesbank President Karl Otto Poehl that German monetary union was a disaster, dealers said. The CAC-40 index closed at 1,740.97, down 36.94 points or 2.08 per cent.					
LONDON — Shares closed sharply lower on Wall Street weakness, ignoring what dealers said was an uninspiring British budget from Chancellor Norman Lamont. The FTSE 100 index of Britain's leading shares closed 31.6 points lower at 2,459.0 in brisk volume of 614 million shares.					
NEW YORK — Blue chips tumbled more than 50 points in late-morning trading after IBM Corp. opened down 9½ points after a delay. After dropping about 51, the Dow Jones Industrial average was off 43.22, or 1.18 per cent, at 2,886.63 at 1648 GMT. IBM said later its first quarter earnings would likely be about half of the current mean estimate of \$1.80 a share.					

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES					
Tuesday, March 19, 1991 Central Bank official rates					
U.S. dollar	Buy	Sell	Japanese yen (for 100)	489.3	492.3
U.S. dollar	675.0	679.0	Dutch guilder	366.9	369.1
Deutsche mark	1207.0	1214.2	Swedish crown	113.1	113.8
Swiss franc	413.4	415.9	Italian lira (for 100)	55.4	55.7
French franc	478.9	481.8	Belgian franc (for 10)	200.8	202.0
	121.4	122.1			

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Envoy wants debt forgiveness as good as Poland's

Egypt and World Bank sign memorandum of understanding

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egypt and the World Bank signed a memorandum of understanding outlining reforms for Cairo's beleaguered economy saddled with a \$36 billion foreign debt, a cabinet minister says.

The memorandum, signed Monday night, clears Egypt's way for \$150 million in loans and grants from the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the European Community.

It also will help Egypt with negotiations on a clean bill of economic health from the World Bank's sister organisation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The last 18-month reform programme agreed between Egypt and the IMF expired nearly three years ago.

Makramallah said the memorandum signed with the World Bank sets broad lines for reforms to decrease huge losses in the public sector and increase opportunities for the private sector. The reforms also include increasing and improving local production and boosting exports.

An Egyptian economic expert, who declined to be identified, said signing the memorandum of understanding could speed up Egyptian agreement with the IMF on a so-called letter of intent packaging Cairo's reform programme.

The IMF and Egypt agree on the nature but not the pace of projected reforms. They include foreign exchange rates based on market forces, higher interest rates, removal of government subsidies and reduced government spending.

The government wants to move slowly, specially on removal of subsidies, to avoid social unrest. Signing of the IMF document

debt was close to \$50 billion. But Egypt's strong anti-Iraq position in the Gulf crisis led the United States to write off Cairo's military debts of almost \$7 billion. Oil-rich Arab states in the Gulf area also forgave Egyptian debts totalling \$7 billion.

U.S. President George Bush said he will urge other Western countries to make similar gestures. And the so-called Group of Seven industrialised countries decided in January to write off about one-third of Egypt's public debts. No figure was given.

Meanwhile, Egyptian ambassador to Washington, El Sayed Abdul Raouf El Reedy, is calling on Western nations to erase half of his country's foreign debt along the lines of a debt forgiveness programme granted to Poland last week.

Reedy said in an interview with Reuters that Egypt was extremely close to an agreement with the IMF on steps to reform its economy.

"Given the needs of the Egyptian economy and the special role it has played and continues to play in the region for peace, the rule of law and the creation of a regional order, we should be treated at least as well as Poland," Reedy said in the interview.

The Paris Club of 16 creditor nations last week cut in half the \$33.8 billion they hold of Poland's \$48.5 billion debt in recognition of the steps it has taken to create a market economy.

It was the first time the club, an informal grouping of major lending countries, had agreed to a major reduction of debt for a so-called middle-income country.

Some club members were wary of creating a precedent but U.S. officials have argued that Egypt should benefit from similar treatment after it has adopted painful economic medicine advocated by the IMF.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker pledged Washington's backing for a debt forgiveness programme when he visited Egypt last week. The United States was a prime mover in cutting Poland's debt.

Some diplomats in Cairo were recently quoted as saying that Egypt was in danger of turning away the chance of turning the international good will it earned during the Gulf crisis into debt forgiveness by failing to move fast enough on economic reform.

Reedy said Egypt had resolved most of the outstanding questions in lengthy negotiations with the IMF and only one major issue remained outstanding. He declined to say what it was but said confident of an agreement soon.

The IMF wants Egypt to implement a proposed sales tax and bring domestic energy prices in line with world levels. The Egyptian government has balked, fearing domestic protests at price rises.

Reedy said Egypt would soon introduce its sales tax. He said Egypt was committed to introducing a true market economy.

"We have already taken drastic measures on liberalising our exchange rate and interest rates and on the decontrol of prices to make the Egyptian economy responsive to market forces and free it from distortions," he said.

"An IMF agreement will pave the way to debt forgiveness," said Reedy.

Bundesbank chief says German monetary union was a disaster

BRUSSELS (R) — German monetary union last year was a disaster which should serve as an example for the European Community's (EC's) own efforts.

Bundesbank President Karl Otto Poehl said Tuesday.

The West German mark was introduced in the eastern part of the country at the wrong rate and with little preparation, the head

of Germany's powerful central bank told a committee of the European Parliament in Brussels.

"So the result is disaster as you can see," Poehl said.

"We have a very drastic illustration these days," he added, referring to the 12-nation Community's work on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

The West German mark became the legal currency of East Germany on last July 1, three months before the two Germanys became one.

It replaced the East German currency at up to one-to-one parity in a country which Poehl said was "completely uncompetitive."

"We introduced the Deutsche mark from one day to another without practically any preparation... and I would add at a wrong exchange rate," Poehl said.

"I predicted this. I am not criticising the decisions. But the outcome was predictable," he added.

EC leaders agreed last October that the second stage of the project to introduce a single currency should start on Jan. 1, 1994. Representatives of the 12 EC governments have been meeting once every two weeks since December for EMU treaty talks.

Paris cuts key rate

PARIS (R) — The Bank of France caught financial markets off guard Monday when it cut its key intervention rate by a quarter of a percentage point to nine per cent despite the franc's weakness within the European Community's monetary grid.

The Bank of France has decided to cut its intervention rate in line with the softening of rates on the money market and favourable elements regarding inflation, the central bank said.

Consumer prices rose 0.2 per cent in February, leaving them 3.5 per cent higher than 12 months previously.

Despite this control over inflation, the timing of the rate reduction was surprising, currency dealers said.

Although Finance Minister Pierre Bérégovoy has made no secret of his desire to cut interest rates to help industry, the franc's position at its European Monetary System (EMS) floor against the high-flying Spanish peseta had appeared to rule out any reduction in the short term.

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Pretoria grants freedom to 40 political prisoners

Hawke considers visit to S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa's reformist government, saying "let bygones be bygones," granted freedom Tuesday to 40 political prisoners including pro- and anti-apartheid activists accused of bomb attacks and arms theft.

A Correctional Services Department official said white extremist leader Piet "Shoot" Rudolph was freed overnight and 39 other prisoners would be released in the course of this week from Pretoria Prison and Cape Town's Robben Island Penal Colony.

The 40 are one of the largest groups granted amnesty or indemnity as the result of a deal between the government and Nelson Mandela's anti-apartheid African National Congress (ANC).

The ANC welcomed the releases but expressed concern at the release of Rudolph, who it said belonged to forces which "have clearly stated their intention to derail the peace process."

Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee, announcing the releases, quoted a speech by President F.W. de Klerk last year that said: "Conflict must end. Secret agendas must be scrapped. Let bygones be bygones. Let us forget real and imagined injustices of the past and create a new future for our children."

Rudolph had faced trial on charges of stealing weapons from an air force arsenal and exploding five bombs at targets including offices of the ruling National Party.

The 40 also include six anti-

apartheid activists accused of bombing Cape Town airport and setting off a car bomb in the city centre in 1987.

None of the bombings caused deaths or serious injury.

Thirty-three serving prisoners were granted amnesty including one who has spent a quarter of a century in jail.

De Klerk approved the releases as part of the process of implementing a key reform accord last August in which the ANC suspended its armed struggle in return for the release of political prisoners and return of exiles.

Coetsee said the releases would bring to 310 the number of convicted political prisoners freed so far under reforms aimed at scrapping 300 years of white domination and giving political rights to the black majority.

Human rights groups say they have identified 1,500 political prisoners and suspect there are as many again in jail who could be classified as political prisoners.

Meanwhile Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke is considering visiting South Africa later this year to help encourage the dismantling of apartheid, a spokesman for the prime minister said Tuesday.

The visit would be only the second by an Australian prime minister to South Africa and would be a major foreign policy shift by Australia, one of the staunchest supporters of sanctions against South Africa.

"Yes, we are considering a trip, but at this stage it is only an option," the spokesman told

Reuters.

The possibility of Hawke visiting South Africa follows the February announcement by South African President F.W. de Klerk on removing the remaining structures of apartheid race laws.

Australia has said it will consider phasing out sporting, cultural and economic sanctions against South Africa once legislative changes to apartheid are introduced.

The mostly likely timetable for the visit would be after Hawke attends a Commonwealth heads of government meeting (CHOGM) in Zimbabwe in October, the spokesman said from Canberra.

"I'm going to Zimbabwe in October. If the processes and the sorts of emergent timetables in South Africa were to go on then that (a visit to South Africa) is something I could consider," Hawke said in the Australian Financial Review newspaper Tuesday.

"I regard it essentially as an obligation on Australia to take a lead now. Just as we took the lead in imposing sanctions trying to force the smashing of apartheid," Hawke said.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans also plans to visit South Africa this year, a spokesman for Evans said.

"No date has been set at this stage, but he is expecting to make the trip in the second half of the year," he said.

The trip by Evans, the first by an Australian minister since the late 1960s, would precede Hawke's.

Havel to address NATO during visit to Belgium

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel arrived Tuesday for a three-day visit in which he will become the first East European head of state to address the NATO alliance.

He also will meet with European Community (EC) and Belgian officials.

Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens met Havel at the airport. The Czech leader was to hold talks with Martens later and pay a call on King Baudouin.

In talks with EC officials Wednesday, Havel is expected to continue his country's quest for closer links to Western Europe, launched after a bloodless revolution ousted the Communist regime in Prague in late 1989.

At NATO headquarters Thursday, Havel likely will press for closer cooperation with the Western alliance but is not expected to ask for membership, said a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation official who demanded anonymity.

Havel will address officials from the 16 NATO nations — including about half their foreign ministers — and then hold closed-door talks with the allies, the official said.

Japan foreign minister off to U.S. to patch up ties

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama heads to Washington Wednesday to try to patch up relations with the United States soured by the Gulf war.

He also will try to ensure that Japan will not be ignored by the United States and its allies in their efforts to craft the post-Gulf war world.

Japan was conspicuously absent from the initial talks U.S. President George Bush and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had with leaders of the Western and Arab allies on what to do after the war.

A summit between Bush and Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu was delayed at least twice by the war and Bush's busy postwar schedule, which included meetings with the leaders of Britain, France and Canada. Political analysts say that has left the Japanese government embarrassed and upset.

Even Foreign Ministry officials, who strive to put Japan's relations with Washington in the best possible light, acknowledge that the alliance needs a boost.

"We have seen growing frustrations about each other, not only on the part of the United States but also on the Japanese side," said a Foreign Ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "If it is left as it is, it might hurt the sound relationship between the two countries."

Nakayama is to meet Baker Thursday to discuss Middle East peace and bilateral relations. He also will try to secure a Kaifu-Bush summit.

One of the foreign minister's major tasks will be public relations, to shore up Japan's image in American eyes after the Gulf war.

Tokyo contributed about \$11 billion to the allied forces, but was not able to send personnel to the war. The Japanese constitutional ban on the use of force to settle international disputes was cited by opposition parties that scuttled a government proposal to send soldiers to perform non-combat duties.

While Japan insists it stood steadfastly by the United States during the crisis, Tokyo has been singled out for criticism by some U.S. congressmen who believe Japan did not do enough for the allied effort to oust Iraq from Kuwait.

The Japanese public is acutely aware of the criticism, which receives wide media attention here. On Tuesday, for example, the mass-circulated newspaper Yomiuri had a front-page article on 34 bills introduced in the U.S. Congress critical of Tokyo's war contribution.

"Anti-Japanese bills are rash, clearly showing U.S. irritation," screamed one headline in the newspaper.

Hard feelings toward the United States also appear to be growing in Japan, says a confidential report commissioned by the Foreign Ministry.

A summary of the report, which was drafted by the Japan Institute of Foreign Affairs, said growing anti-Americanism could endanger the security alliance under which the United States is obliged to defend Japan.

Indian leader predicts 'river of blood' during polls

AGARTALA, India (R) — India's May general elections could erupt in a "river of blood" and the political leaders who forced them should be tried for murder, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal said Tuesday.

Lal, a maverick peasant leader who is no stranger to political controversy, told a news conference he would not stand for re-election to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament.

Instead, Lal said he would wage a personal campaign against party leaders he blamed for thrusting elections, not due until late 1994, on a country torn by caste and religious violence.

He named Rajiv Gandhi, leader of the Congress Party that has long dominated Indian politics, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, toppled as prime minister last November, and Lal Krishan Advani, leader of the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"These three should be tried for murder under the Indian penal code because the polls are bound to be marred by violence," Lal said during a campaign visit to the northeast state of Tripura.

"There is going to be a lot of trouble and these three want to get top job in the country over a river of blood."

Parliament was dissolved last week after Prime Minister Chandrashekar, head of a tiny minority government, resigned

saying he was fed up with attacks from Congress, whose votes had kept him in power.

No other party was able to cobble together a majority coalition, forcing elections. The dates should be announced early next month.

India's 521-million-strong electorate is expected to be asked to vote in late May for the country's fourth government in 18 months. Lal said another hung parliament was certain.

"The country will pay very dearly. The future of India is very bleak and these power-hungry politicians who want to be kings are responsible for it," he said.

Lal said the elections would cost India one-third of the nearly \$1.8 billion it borrowed from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January to ease an economic crisis.

"Can we afford it? We can't," he said.

All the major parties have launched their campaigns in the past few days.

Gandhi has projected Congress, which has ruled for most of the time since India became independent from Britain in 1947, as the only party able to return the country of 850 million people to stability.

Singh, head of the National Front Alliance, is seeking the votes of lower caste Hindus and the 100 million Muslim minority that fears the BJP.

In the north city of Patna Monday, he vowed to pursue the policies that resulted in his fall — more jobs for those at the bottom end of the Hindu caste system and a secular system.

"We have to get the poor organized and looking at you here today, I feel confident of an imminent victory against thousands of years of your exploitation," the aristocratic Hindu told a half-million audience of mostly rural poor.

The BJP launched its campaign with a renewed vow to build a temple on the site of a mosque in the holy town of Ayodhya.

Singh's caste policies and his tough stand against a BJP movement to build a temple on the site of what it says was the birthplace of the Hindu god, Ram, led to widespread violence last year in which hundreds of people were killed.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has condemned as gross violation of human rights and Indian security clampdown in disputed Kashmir in which 12 people have died in three days.

"The recent wave of massive house-to-house searches, arbitrary arrests, torture, murder and gang rapes by Indian army and paramilitary forces in occupied Kashmir provide gruesome examples of the inhuman behaviour of the Indian forces," a Foreign Ministry statement said Monday night.

Indian forces cordoned off parts of Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, for the third successive day Monday and scoured the city's Dal Lake area for Muslim secessionists.

In its statement, the Foreign Ministry called Indian actions in the Kashmir Valley an affront to the conscience of the international community and urged the withdrawal of special powers that provided a cover for excesses by security forces.

A Muslim religious leader in Srinagar said three days of uninterrupted curfew had denied religious freedom by preventing Muslims from properly observing the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

India's Kashmir Governor Girish Saxena said last week that militants were making a seasonal push across the Himalayan passes from Azad Kashmir, the one-third of the mountain region controlled by Pakistan.

Pakistan denies Indian charges that it arms and trains the militants, but it gives strong political support to "freedom-fighters" demanding Kashmiri independence or the merger of Indian Kashmir with Pakistan.

Military experts and senior Foreign Ministry officials from the two countries were due to meet in New Delhi before the end of the month to discuss ways to reduce tension on the border.

Moscow names hardliner as envoy to U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Viktor Komplexov, a veteran Soviet diplomat with a hard-line reputation, is to be the new Soviet ambassador to Washington, administration officials disclosed Monday.

Komplexov, a 58-year-old specialist in U.S. and Latin American affairs, will succeed Alexander A. Bessmertnykh. Bessmertnykh was promoted to foreign minister after Eduard A. Shevardnadze resigned last year with a warning that conservatives could be pushing the Soviet Union toward dictatorship.

The appointment of Komplexov as ambassador strengthens the recent conservative trend in Moscow. In addition to Shevardnadze, some of President Mikhail Gorbachev's most liberal advisers have quit while conservatives are growing in authority.

Komplexov held various posts in the Soviet embassy in Washington. In Moscow he was director of the U.S. Department in the Foreign Ministry from 1978 to 1982, when he moved into his current job, deputy minister for foreign affairs.

Despite his long background in U.S. affairs, Komplexov was shifted to deal with Latin America while Shevardnadze, who is regarded as a liberal, was foreign minister.

Secretary of State James Baker said at a news conference Friday night in Moscow that U.S.-Soviet relations had passed through a difficult period. He credited Gorbachev with attempting to arrange a dialogue with leaders in the independence-minded Baltic republics and with trying to shift the sagging Soviet economy toward a Western-style market system.

During that bombing campaign against newspaper, government buildings and airline offices, foreign investment in Colombia, one of Latin America's most stable economies, plunged.

The Medellín cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, has repeatedly accused security forces of torturing and killing members of their organization, often in front of their families.

Police reports usually say drug traffickers who die during operations are killed in shootouts.

In an interview published last week in Spanish newspaper El Mundo, Escobar said he would turn himself in when the government could guarantee traffickers human rights. He said he trusted the government's justice system but not the security forces.

The justice minister has promised the government would guarantee Escobar's life and human rights and said it would extradite him to the United States if he gave himself up.

Presidential security counselor Rafael Pardo said after the statement was issued that "the extraditables" were contradicting

SPD against Germans fighting for U.N.

BONN (R) — Germany's opposition Social Democrats (SPD) came out Tuesday against sending troops to fight under U.N. or European banners, thwarting Chancellor Helmut Kohl's plans for a wider military role in the world.

The party executive agreed that Germany, criticised for its toughline role in the Gulf conflict, should only send troops abroad for United Nations "blue-helmet" peacekeeping missions, SPD leader-designate Joern Engholm told journalists.

German soldiers, barred since World War II from operating outside the NATO area, should be kept out of any intervention force formed under the Western European Union (WEU), outgoing party leader Hans-Jochen Vogel added.

The SPD decision scuttled Kohl's plan to free the German military from self-imposed post-war limits and let it join multilateral missions like the Gulf coalition.

Kohl, who argues the newly-

united Germany has greater responsibilities in the world, needs a two-thirds majority in parliament to modify passages in the 1949 constitution intended to prevent any resurgence of German militarism.

"After a long and heated debate, we decided that Germans should take over new responsibilities in future peace-keeping missions, the so-called 'blue helmets,'" said Engholm, reporting on the SPD executive's meeting Monday evening.

"This is the first time permission has been sought for sending military personnel outside NATO borders. With the history we Germans have, that's not an easy decision."

Instead of stressing military strategies, the SPD wants Germany to play a more active role in helping countries tackle the economic and social problems that lead to war, he said.

Engholm said a wider military role could also upset the Soviet Union, which still has over 300,000 troops in former East

Germany. "The risks are too incalculable," he said.

Vogel, due to hand over the SPD leadership to Engholm at a party convention in May, said the SPD supported efforts for a European union with common foreign and security policies.

"But we do not favour military missions under the WEU outside the NATO area," he said.

Spurred on by their inability to act collectively in the Gulf crisis, several European states have suggested the WEU, a long-dormant defence forum, be given a military arm that could provide an intervention force outside the NATO area.

Conservative politicians immediately criticised the SPD, saying it was trying to duck the greater responsibility that united Germany now had in the world.

"If the SPD sticks to this position, it would support a special role for Germany that would lead it away from European unity and damage Germany's image."

Spain joins Latin America states in push for Salvadorean peace

MANAGUA (R) — Spain has joined forces with three Latin American countries to help El Salvador's rightist government and left-wing rebels negotiate a ceasefire in their 11-year-old civil war, the Spanish minister said Monday.

"The impression is that we are at perhaps a decisive and hopefully favourable moment" in the Salvadorean conflict, Francisco Fernandez Ordonez told reporters late Monday.

Fernandez Ordonez and his counterparts from Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia met in Managua to discuss the 1980s sought solutions to Central America's civil wars. The three countries are attending the Managua meeting as observers.

The diplomacy on the Salvadorean conflict took place outside the formal framework of the annual meeting on EC aid to

Front (FMLN) and President Alfredo Cristiani's government had shown interest in quickly negotiating a ceasefire in the conflict, which has killed 75,000 people.

"We are going to try to help them explore (the possibility of a ceasefire) and find a solution," Fernandez Ordonez said. He gave no further details on the role the four countries would play in U.N.-mediated peace negotiations.

Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia along with Panama formed the Contadora Group which in the 1980s sought solutions to Central America's civil wars. The three countries are attending the Managua meeting as observers.

The diplomacy on the Salvadorean conflict took place outside the formal framework of the annual meeting on EC aid to

Central America. At the conference the EC countries have agreed to study the possibility of granting preferential trade status to Central American exports.

The FMLN sent a top-level delegation headed by Commander Joaquin Villalobos to lobby the foreign ministers on a new rebel peace plan to speed up the peace process.

The rebel plan calls for agreements on constitutional reforms by April 30 and a negotiated ceasefire plus an accord on reforms in the Salvadorean military by May 30. The plan has not been released publicly but journalists gained access to copies of the proposal at the Managua meeting.

Cristiani said Monday that the FMLN proposal would be useful if it proved to be more than just "hot air."

Colombia dug lords threaten new terror campaign

BOGOTA (R) — Colombia's drug barons are threatening to unleash a new terror campaign by exploding powerful bombs in major cities for each one of their members killed or tortured by the authorities.

"We declare ourselves under alert and for every one of our colleagues tortured or disappeared we will detonate 1,000-kilogramme bombs in Colombia's main cities," leaders of the Medellín cocaine cartel said Monday.

In a statement sent to radio stations, "the extraditables," who head the powerful drug cartel, said their cause was no longer to fight extradition to the United States but to defend their human rights.

"We are not being hunted to be extradited, but to be assassinated," their communiqué added.

The drug lords also threatened to execute two prominent journalists held captive since last year unless the army and police respected the rights of imprisoned drug traffickers.

A new bombing campaign by Colombia's drug barons would put an end to eight months of relative peace.

1990, drug chiefs declared a unilateral truce in their 12-month bombing campaign in which up to 2,000 people were killed.

During that bombing campaign against newspaper, government buildings and airline offices, foreign investment in Colombia, one of Latin America's most stable economies, plunged.

The Medellín cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, has repeatedly accused security forces of torturing and killing members of their organization, often in front of their families.

Police reports usually say drug traffickers who die during operations are killed in shootouts.

In an interview published last week in Spanish newspaper El Mundo, Escobar said he would turn himself in when the government could guarantee traffickers human rights. He said he trusted the government's justice system but not the security forces.

The justice minister has promised the government would guarantee Escobar's life and human rights and said it would extradite him to the United States if he gave himself up.

Presidential security counselor Rafael Pardo said after the statement was issued that "the extraditables" were contradicting

themselves by threatening to kill the kidnapped journalists — Francisco Santos, editor-in-chief of El Tiempo newspaper, and Maruja Pachon, head of the state film institute — while demanding respect for their own rights.

In a separate development, three policemen and four leftist rebels were killed Monday and two police were missing when some 30 guerrillas attacked government buildings and robbed a bank in a southwestern Colombian town, police said.

Rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) raided the town of Candalaria 300 kilometres southwest of Bogotá, where they fired on municipal offices and the police station and stole \$2,500 from a bank, said the police spokesman who asked not to be identified.

"They tried to take over the town, but they only managed to get away with some money," he said. He said police, aided by two helicopters, forced the guerrillas to retreat in a truck which they stole from a local sugar mill.

One of the policemen was killed by a grenade blast and two others died in a shootout. One officer and three civilians were injured and two other policemen have disappeared and might have

been kidnapped, he said. Police were searching for groups of guerrillas in areas surrounding the town.

Rebels set off powerful bombs at a gas pipeline south of the capital, and the resulting fireball torched the surrounding forest and a flimsy shantytown, injuring 30 peasants, the state-run oil company has reported.

Two bombs containing a total of about 1,100 pounds (500 kilograms) of dynamite exploded alongside the pipeline 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Bogotá Sunday, according to the oil company Ecopetrol and the state governor's office.

The blasts destroyed several farms and killed 10,000 chickens, witnesses said.

The rebels also blew up an electrical tower in Tibu, near the Venezuelan border. The tower supplies energy to a pumping station along the Cano-Limon crude oil pipeline, which transports 230,000 barrels a day from fields in eastern Colombia to Caribbean ports for export.

Authorities blamed the Simon Bolivar guerrilla coordinator, a new umbrella organisation that includes two rebel armies, the National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces,

COLUMN

Sheep-eating panda stuns experts

PEKING (R) — Cuddly, shy and chewing on bamboo — the image of China's rare panda has been endangered by a hungry female that has reportedly taken to devouring sheep. "Doesn't eat bamboo, eats sheep," screamed the headline in the Wenhui Bao, an official Shanghai newspaper. A panda had left its forest home in the southwest province of Sichuan and attacked and eaten three sheep, it said. The animal then fell asleep in the sheep pen and refused to leave. The panda, named Jiasie Shanmei, has eaten more than 30 sheep, the paper's Monday edition said. Shocked experts who caught the Panda for research believed she had been forced to kill because her natural bamboo forest habitat was disappearing.

Goodfellas, Cinema Paradiso win U.K. awards

LONDON (AP) — This year's Oscar nominee Goodfellas and last year's Oscar-winning Cinema Paradiso dominated the awards from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Goodfellas, director Martin Scorsese's film about life in the mafia, won Best Film, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay, in the black-tie ceremony at London's Grosvenor House Hotel. The film is competing in the same categories at this year's U.S. Academy Awards on March 25. Cinema Paradiso, which won the Oscar last year for Best Foreign Language Film, won five of the British Academy Awards including Best Actor (Philippe Noiret), Best Supporting Actor (Salvatore Cascio), and Best Film Not in the English Language. Cascio, a bespectacled 10-year-old wasn't tall enough to speak into the podium microphone. But he uttered a shy "thank you very much" into the lapel microphone of host Noel Edmonds. The Best Actress Award went to Jessica Tandy in Driving Miss Daisy. She won the same prize at last year's Oscar's for her performance as a crotchety southerner. Whoopi Goldberg was named Best Supporting Actress for Ghosts. The comedienne is an Oscar nominee this year for the same performance. Six Oscar candidates this year are Danes With Wolves Awakenings and the Godfather Part III were ineligible for consideration at these awards because they had not opened in Britain in time for the awards. The ceremony for the first time included live satellite appearances from winners in Los Angeles, New York, and in director Scorsese's case an unnamed place in Florida. The academy presented a special award to Deborah Kerr for her overall work, and she was given a standing ovation when she went to the podium to accept it.

Golfer gets 'hole in pocket'

NEW DELHI (R) — A Pakistani golfer hit a tee shot straight into the pocket of an Indian player who was standing in a sand trap in tournament play, the Times of India reported. Faisal Qureshi drove off on the 10th hole of the Army Golf Course in the north Indian town of Meerut into the pocket of Maqbool Singh, who was trying to blast his way out of a bunker on the fourth hole. Officials at the Modi All India Open Golf Tournament played Sunday ruled that Qureshi had to drop the ball where Singh was standing — in the sand.

Julia Roberts has new neighbour — Richard Gere

BEVERLY HILLS, California (AP) — Pretty Woman star Julia Roberts has a new neighbour — Actor Richard Gere. Gere, who turned up with Miss Roberts in the hit comedy, has purchased a \$2.25 million home in the Hollywood Hills. Miss Roberts bought a nearby house last year. Gere's one-storey contemporary house was built in 1952. Gere also is building a home in upstate New York.

Tiny dinosaur fossil found in China

PEKING (R) — A Sino-Canadian research team found a 10-cm (four-inch) long fossil of a baby Ankylosaur, a type of dinosaur, in China's Inner Mongolia region, the official New China News Agency said. The fossil was believed to be the smallest ever found, it said. The vegetarian Ankylosaur lived 135 million to 65 million years ago, the agency said.